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Issued Weekly

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by Howard Horace Herr

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FA

RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London.
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FA

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RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 21, 1918.

Vol. XXXIX. No. 3.

THE STOP THIS SIDE ETERNITY.

BY HORACE HOWARD HERR,

Author of "Lem and I on the Ypres War Run," "The Emblem on the Whistling Post," "'Eggs' Edgewood—All Man," etc.

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRAKES REFUSE TO WORK.

SHE was ahead of me less than a car length when I opened my eyes.

With all the tonnage drawbars could hold together, rolling so fast that the cars were bucking against the engine as if trying to shunt it out of the way, I knew there wasn't a chance to plug them hard enough to make the stop in time to save her.

Time enough, however, for me to be stabbed with unutterable remorse. Asleep in the cab, wheeling them as fast as they would roll on an easy water grade and on the main line. A madman's folly! Idiot! Criminal!

I closed my eyes and made a frantic grab for the air valve. I gave them the whole works, but I knew it was too late!

With closed eyes I waited, although I knew that it was all over almost before my hand touched the valve lever. I had been waiting a long time, it seemed, before I realized the brakes were not taking hold.

Was the air cut in? Of course not, and there was the Sand Cut curve and the bridge over Cicero Creek just ahead of us at the bottom of the grade!

Dave Marzo put a Baldwin hog and six cars of pigs in that creek because he didn't steady them down when he hit the Sand Cut curve. If the brakes didn't take hold in a second or two there wouldn't be enough left of Cicero Creek to make a bath-tub for an infant fish!

A great finish for Big Dave Kendall! Two years in the roundhouse, a year feeding the goat, three years spading all kinds of coal into all kinds of engines and keeping a feather on all kinds of stacks, three years at a throttle without a mark against me and then—to fall asleep while hitting only the high spots on the main line!

If the engine and all the cars buried me in the bottom of Cicero Creek, so much the better, but what a tragedy that she should be an innocent victim of my folly!

But the fireman! Give him a chance, at least! Be man enough to tell him what is going to happen when we hit the Sand Cut curve and the bridge! Give him a chance to jump!

I looked toward his side of the cab. He wasn't there. He wasn't on the deck. My first thought was that he was wise to what had happened and had climbed back over the tank to make a stab at cutting the air.

Then it dawned on me that while I must have hit her, there had been not the slightest jar. Maybe—could it be—he had seen her ahead of us in time to climb out to the pilot and pick her up!

I looked ahead again. The stack and the front end were gone. The whistle, the sand dome, the bell, the boiler—great balls of fire, there was nothing ahead of me, not even rails!

Again I closed my eyes and waited. I tried to think, but a fellow has to have something more than an oil can and a Stilson wrench before he can think. No one ever accused me of being a deep thinker.

I couldn't pick out, on the spur of the moment, a lead that promised to be the key to the yard I was in, so I just whispered to myself that nothing can happen to nothing and opened my eyes, expecting a flock of white blackbirds to be swinging on the telegraph wires.

Of course the flock wasn't there, nor were the telegraph wires. If they had been I would have been no more perplexed than I was over what I saw. There was Shorty Davis standing over on the fireman's side of the cab and there wasn't any cab for him to stand on.

I looked at him for a second or two and just when I was going to ask him when he had been buried in Cicero Creek, I discovered he had no feet. Of course he had feet, but I couldn't see them.

Just how strange this was can't be appreciated except by those who know the size of Shorty's feet. He was knee deep in white water.

I closed my eyes again to ruminate.

Could it be that I had gone to sleep in the cab and jammed into the tail-end of the milk train? If that wasn't what Shorty Davis was standing in, what was it? It occurred to me that, maybe, if I took another squint I might be able to see what Shorty was standing in.

Whatever it was I was in it up to my neck. There was some of it between Shorty and me, some more of it straight ahead of me and, when I looked out of what should have been my side of the cab, I'll be a goat with an ingrown stack, if she wasn't there, smiling at me, just as if I hadn't run her down with a ten-wheeler and a string of loads so long that you needed a spy-glass to make sure whether the tail-lights behind you were on your dog-house or on the last string you passed.

Her face looked familiar but, as Bill Shakespeare was wont to remark, this world is still deceived by ornament, and many a piece of Christmas gold has turned green before Easter. While I was debating with myself whether or not I'd take a chance and speak to the familiar face, Shorty Davis, still knee deep in what was left of the milk train, came athwart the unstable horizon.

There wasn't a chance of my being wrong about Shorty's face. If ever you got one look at it, you would know it the next time you encountered it even if you had your eyes shut.

It looked much like a head-end after two of them have tried to pass on one track; of course it wasn't quite so big, and instead of being topped off by a smoke-stack it was decorated with home-grown, red hair. I knew I couldn't be wrong about Shorty's face, so I spoke to him.

"What's the big idea, Shorty?" I asked. "Using buttermilk on your corns?"

At that, just for a minute, I was afraid I'd made a mistake. I never knew Shorty Davis to hurry except once. That was down at Milford, on the south branch, where there's a lunch room that never has more than enough to feed four persons and a tallowpot.

We pulled in there one day with a full crew and two deadheads. Shorty climbed out on the pilot as we drifted to the switch. He leaped off to head us in, unlocked the switch, tossed it over and had run a half-mile and was down to his second piece of pie before I had them pulled into the clear.

When I spoke to Shorty about the buttermilk bath he made one leap for the door. It was a sprightly, graceful movement like a cow ducking off the rails almost too late.

That suddenness on Shorty's part suggested to me that everything wasn't just as they appeared, or, to make myself plain, things which seemed to be were not. During the interim, while Shorty was taking up the slack between him and the door, I added two and two and by counting on my fingers got an answer that didn't make sense, to be sure, but seemed to be the only answer I could get.

I was in bed. Up to my neck in bed. It wasn't the bed I had been paying rent on.

It had a clean, white spread over it and there were clean, white walls about me, with windows in them through which one could see without rubbing a clear spot with a bunch of waste.

Shorty, before he had given me an imitation of an elephant doing the tango, had been standing at the side of the bed. That was why I couldn't see his wheel-base. The milk train must have been in the clear.

There was nothing to it! I was in bed. It couldn't be, but it was.

I took one glass of beer once but I didn't keep it long enough to let it do any damage. I couldn't be drunk because the glass of beer you had ten years ago, when it didn't stay down, wouldn't make you drunk for so long a time.

Yet I was clear up to my neck in bed!

I tried to figure out how and when I registered in for the hay special, but my brain kept slipping and I couldn't get much of anywhere. I believe I could have arrived at the right answer if it hadn't been for the young woman, with the familiar face, there at my right, so close I could have touched her if I had extended my hand.

Even when I'm clothed and in my right mind it makes me nervous to be near a woman. To have one of them standing by when a fellow is in bed, even though he is neatly tucked in, is more than embarrassing; it is terrifying.

You can't take one hundred and eighty-four pounds of hoghead, spread over six feet and two inches, and drape a white bedspread over it so that it will look graceful. No, it can't be done.

Might just as well try to put overalls on a freight engine and make it look human.

When I realized that a young woman was in the room where I was up to my neck in bed, I felt peevish that fate had flagged me before I hit Sand Cut curve and Cicero Creek. If I'd gone into the creek there would have been a show of wiggling out, but where I was—there wasn't a chance for a getaway.

Leave it to Big Dave to grab the wrong signal when there's a dame on the main line. It occurred to me that if I folded myself up I would not make such a hunk and I tried to turn on my left side.

I guess some thoughtless person had left a butcher knife in the bed and when I tried to change my position the knife slipped in between my ribs until the point tickled my backbone.

In a flash my little white room was covered with soot. It was just as if a student fireman had heaved in about a ton of coal. The fog was so thick you could feel it.

I made up my mind that I didn't care how big a hunk I made when I wasn't folded up, dropped back in the position I was in before I found the butcher knife and stayed on the spot until the fog rolled by.

The atmosphere cleared finally, and I discovered the familiar face just above my own.

"Please don't attempt to move," she was saying.

"Don't worry. Rover will play dead even if you don't say please," I replied, thereby showing the lady that pain couldn't keep me from indulging that keen sense of humor which, added to my superior qualifications as an engineer, makes me so popular everywhere I go, as it were.

Just then Shorty Davis headed in through the fog, pulling Dr. Heath. I knew it was Doc because he had a pill box in one hand and his chin whiskers in the other.

Old bone-setter was first to pull the whistle.

"Well, Kendall, do you know me?"

"Yes," I said, "I think you'll find my

pocketbook under the pillow. If you'll look in it you'll see that I can't possibly be sick more than a dollar and two bits' worth."

"Do you recognize this man?" Doc asked as he pointed to Shorty.

"That's Faithful Fido, the dog-faced boy," I replied.

Doc looked at me and then at Shorty and then ran his hand through the alfalfa field on his chin, indicating, I suppose, deep mental exercise.

"Do you think he'll ever again be right in his head?" Shorty asked. Knowing that the young lady couldn't help but hear that slanderous remark, I began to foam a little.

"What's the joke?" I asked. "I'm so right in my head that I'm not going to stand much comedy from a milk train pilot!

"What's the big idea? My rent at Steiger's is paid up to and including the fifteenth of the month and, anyhow, I don't like a room all white like the decorations in a cemetery."

"Do you really know me?" Shorty chimed in, just as if there could be the least doubt of it.

"I hate to admit it, Shorty," I said, "but you've got the goods on me. I know you. You're little Shorty Davis who believes side-tracks were made to earn overtime on.

"Slip me a No. 19 order so I can figure out whether I am a regular time-card train or an extra drag. When did I apply for this run?"

"Don't you remember what happened?" Shorty asked, and right there the young woman of the familiar face chimed in:

"Doctor, he shouldn't try to remember."

"You are right, miss," said the pill peddler. "Just take it for granted that everything is all right, Kendall, and rest until to-morrow. Sleep all you can."

"I'll sleep better if I knew my pay goes on," I suggested.

Doc made no reply, but took up from the little table a glass and fed me about a grease-cup full of medicine that tasted like the juice of a Bermuda onion mixed with the extracted pucker of a green persimmon. After that I had nothing to say because I couldn't whistle words.

Presently the bed began traveling round the room. As it got up speed the monotonous clicking as it rolled over the rail-joints which were not there, made me drowsy.

As I wasn't on my regular run I came to the conclusion that Doc, Shorty, and the familiar face made up the crew that was on the job and, since I seemed to be deadheading, there was no reason why I should hesitate to take my shut-eye and I hopped to it. The hoghead may have been a little careless in spotting for the coal-chute, or a far-sighted switchman may have let the goat hit them pretty hard when coupling in to set out a coach; some such rough handling pulled the air on me before I had my nap finished. I wasn't wide awake—just between switches, so to speak, where a fellow can hear the call-boy kicking on the door but can't answer him.

Most of the lights in my Pullman were out when I opened my eyes and it was some time before the one light on the right wall made the details of the picture within the circle of its rays distinct enough to challenge my attention.

The young woman was seated at the little table near the window, her face well within the circle of the light.

I can rebuild an engine with a monkey wrench and a cold chisel and I'm tolerably handy with a deck of cards, but when it comes to describing a woman's face I'm as much at home as a boomer switchman writing poetry with a fountain pen.

About all I can say of it is that it was the sort of face which, when the light shines on it, makes a fellow quite content to remain quiet and look at it, wondering how it would feel to have to pay a millinery bill for one and a grocery bill for two.

I believe I had spent almost three pay checks on that face before I realized there was a man seated opposite it at the table. The headlight didn't get him, so I couldn't be sure whether he looked like a married man or one who wanted to be.

They were talking in an undertone as if they might have been afraid the head shack would find them and ditch them. I was

so busy trying to decide whether I'd go back to sleep or remain in a very delightful semiconscious snooze, that I had no time to whistle so they'd know they didn't have the whole yard to themselves.

For the most part their conversation sounded like the hum of an electric fan. I heard my name mentioned.

At once I made a determined effort to shake off the sleep that was hanging to me like a tender to an engine or a new passenger conductor to his brass buttons. Only a sentence or two soaked into my drowsy brain.

"Everybody's guilty until they prove their innocence."

I realized that the man, whoever he was, said that. The woman said something interesting, doubtless, but I couldn't get it and when my sounder was working again the man was on the wire.

"All true enough," he was saying. "But this fellow has been carrying notes and packages for Steiger."

"I'm not convinced that Steiger is one of the plotters."

There wasn't the least doubt but that the young woman said that.

"He is an American citizen, always has talked against the Kaiser, has a boy in the army and "

"Before we get through don't be surprised if we find the boy sending home letters which will read a half-dozen different ways."

That sort of a crab could originate only with a man. One didn't have to be wide awake to realize he had a disposition like an emery wheel.

"The only safe way to play this game is to suspect them all until you have the proof that they are all right."

The man switched out a string of conversation that went by me like a blurred sand fence and I caught only the tail-end of it:

"You know as well as I do," he said, "to be a success at this plotting you've got to be above suspicion. When it comes to putting railroads and shops out of commission it's the trusted employee, the best engineer on the pike."

That remark almost woke me up. It was plain that the fellow hiding out in the dark was talking about me. Everybody knows who is the best engineer on the pike, but as for what I had been plotting I couldn't decide from what I heard.

Once I plotted to get out of the yard with only seventy-five per cent of my tonnage rating, but I didn't get away with it, and another time I and my tallowpot framed up on a switch crew so that they got the blame for splitting a switch they didn't run through.

Perhaps I could have discovered the deep, dark crime of which I was suspected if the man in the dark had held his tongue and permitted me time to go over my personal-record file. But he began talking again in that low, guarded tone and he said something which, somehow, hurt my head. Just for a minute I saw something something ugly and terrifying.

"That car couldn't have been spotted to better advantage than it was. It was right where it would do the most damage.

"That wasn't chance. That car stopped when the engine stopped and the engine stopped when the engineer closed the throttle and set the air"

"I watched him for a month and he has done nothing disloyal," the young woman protested.

"Nothing but carry Steiger's notes to the flunky in Morrowton," replied the man in a tone less guarded.

That suggested something to me. If only my mind would take hold of the rails and go some place instead of slipping. Sure, I carried notes for Steiger, and why couldn't I remember to whom the notes went?

The key to the consist was right in my mind when I heard the man talking again.

"That poor fireman would have been a valuable help to us if—"

I didn't hear the remainder of the remark because I remembered I hadn't seen my fireman for a long time.

Where was Hen Martin? He was there on the deck filling the bucket with hot water so we could wash up when the engine was cut off and we were over on the the pit track.

Where was that? Thornville yard or Morrowton? We had pulled by the icehouse and were just opposite the new

freight-house used exclusively for army freight. I had stopped them and then—did the boiler let go?

My mind began to slip again and I couldn't get enough sand under it to hold it on the rails. I tried to unload a few cuss words, but the best I could do was a despairing groan.

The familiar face started toward me I knew the man was tiptoeing out of the room

I meant to insist that he remain because there was something I wanted to ask him. Before I could yell at him the familiar face was hovering above my own and a hand was laid on my forehead

A cool, soft hand feels mighty good on a head that has a lot of lost motion inside of it. I said to myself that nothing mattered much as long as that hand was on my forehead and I shut my eyes and permitted the sorry jumble of senseless junk to slip out of my mind

CHAPTER II.

A TRACER FOR TROUBLE.

A FELLOW is in bad when he finds himself in the back shop and no one, even the foreman, knows just what work is to be done on him. That cool, soft hand on my noble dome put me in a trance from which I didn't revive until daylight had put in three or four hours of yard time.

When I did come out of it, except for a dull ache, my head felt normal and I could think a couple of thoughts through without mixing the high and low ones

The familiar face wasn't present and that helped a little because, when a woman is near, I think like an egg omelet and always step on my feet.

At first I started in to check up my real record on that face. I had seen it before. When? Where?

I took the square root of the area of the steam chest, multiplied it by the wheel-base, carefully subtracted the steam pressure and divided what was left with the coal-pick; but the answer lacked as much as a round trip of being anything that made sense.

I knew that if I kept figuring at it long enough I'd be ruining milk trains and diving into Cicero Creek again, and I decided to quit trying to think and just act natural until the pill-juggler or Shorty Davis registered in

I didn't have to wait long. They came in double heading, with Shorty on the head-end, tiptoeing as if they were sneaking up on pay-day.

There wasn't any doubt but that if I wasn't crazy they were, and I wasn't going to incriminate myself. So I just put it up to them to do the talking.

They did. That is Shorty did. He always does even when you don't give him a chance. When it comes to switching empties there's nothing like Shorty's conversation.

"Are you awake?" he asked and as my eyes were wide open I permitted that one to roll by without flagging it.

"How do you feel?" was the next one he cut off, and knowing he wouldn't understand if I told him I kept my mouth shut.

"Could you eat a light breakfast?" he asked

"That's the first sensible thing you've said," I replied. "If it isn't too light I can eat it.

"Just mention my name to the cook and tell him to switch out a string of flats, two fried eggs so I can look them in the eye, and fence them in with bacon done crisp. While he's making up the train let him send down a bowl of oats and sliced bananas and don't forget the Java."

"It's a graveyard stew for you," Shorty replied. "You know, Dave, we've got to feed you light until we find out whether you're alive yet. You'll never be as near the hearse run again and be bumped off of it, believe me!"

"You're such a cheerful little playmate, Shorty," I said rather peevishly. "Doc, can't you suggest something pleasant, say sawing off my legs or amputating my pocketbook?"

"The last mentioned appeals to me," replied Doc. "I'd almost be willing to do it if I thought it would do any good. How's your pulse?"

That was the beginning of an hour of car whacking that was about as painful an experience as ever I had. Doc thumped and prodded and poked and never once found a spot that wasn't as sore as a student brakeman's nose after he has uncoupled the air without turning off the juice and the air-hose has kicked him in the face.

During the inspection I put myself through a few mental tests to see if my mind would hold the rails. I was in the back-shops. There was no doubt of that and I was determined to find out just how I got there

After Doc finished stirring up the agony inside of me he asked as many fool questions as a master mechanic puts over when he's examining a tallowpot on air. Under other circumstances I'd have told the pill-juggler to run along and mind his own business, but as I wanted to get into the question business myself as soon as he got his work done I answered politely.

"You've had a close call, all right," Doc finally said when he couldn't think of anything else to ask me.

"Yes, I have," I admitted. "Just tell me about it."

"How's your head?" he asked.

"The unoccupied part of it feels rather vacant," I told him. "That part of it that's under cultivation seems to be doing fairly well."

He smiled behind his second-growth alfalfa and said that while he was in the office switching out a mess for me Davis could entertain me.

Shorty pulled up a chair and as soon as the doctor was through the door and in the clear I opened the switch and gave Shorty a high ball.

"What's the answer?" I asked. "Did I get into an argument with a switchman or try to make the hog jump across the turntable pit?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know what happened?" Shorty replied.

"I mean to say that I know as much about how I got in this little white stall as I do about how it would feel to spend a million dollars. If you have anything resembling information, just unload it here."

"You remember pulling into Morrowton and being headed in on the new warehouse track, don't you?"

While I was trying to get enough sand under my mental drivers to start the string of memory, Shorty went on:

"You were pulling Hardy, on 17, and Windy Carson and I were waiting for you to get over the high switch so we could pull out on 22."

There seemed to be no chance in the world for me to handle that much tonnage in my thinking, so I just told Shorty that it didn't make much difference whether or not I remembered Windy Carson and him, both of them being my idea of nothing much to remember.

"Just assume, now, that I've met Windy Carson, and you, and that I'm heading in on the new warehouse track. Then what?"

"You pulled down until the head-end was beyond those two traveling cranes—and a car of munitions let go. Don't you remember that?"

"I'll be honest with you, Shorty," I said. "My mind isn't working just right. Piston packing has gone wrong, I guess.

"About all I can remember for a year or more, it seems, is seeing Hen Martin on the deck filling a bucket with water, and then—"

Something heavy, black and unpleasant seemed to settle over my brain again, and I couldn't quite make out what followed. I tried so hard to recall it that for a moment I forgot that Shorty was present.

"Don't look like that!" I heard Shorty saying to me finally. "Please don't, Dave! It makes me feel cold along my backbone. We won't talk about it if it makes you feel that way."

"But what?" I asked. "Talk about what? Yes, Shorty, something happened that hurts me yet—but what?"

"The car of ammunition let go, I tell you."

"And Hen? Little Hen Martin, my fireboy?" I asked.

I looked at Shorty, and he looked out the window where the sun was shining, and somewhere out on the veranda a canary bird was tossing off music as if it had swallowed an electric piano.

"Yes, I understand," I said finally when I couldn't stand to hear the bird singing. "A big, overgrown stiff like me gets jolted into a clean bed and a vacation, but a regular fellow like little Hen Martin—"

"It was an easy way to go," Shorty broke in, his voice sounding rather lumpy in spots. "He never knew what happened. It tossed you a car length and —"

"I came down in a bin of cotton waste, I suppose," I interrupted. "It takes a duck for water and a fool for luck. Any one else get hurt?"

"Oh, it wrecked all that side of the west yard, blew in the end of the new warehouse, and killed a painter who was working on the roof, knocked the switch shanty into a pile of kindling wood, and—"

"Was that day yard-foreman in it?" I asked.

"No, he was with the crew down on the lower yard lead."

"Looking for another car to tie on to some hog already coupled onto twice its tonnage, I suppose."

"I don't know about that," Shorty replied. "The crew was in the lower yard and—"

Just then the door leading to Doc's office opened and the familiar face looked in.

"How's the patient this morning?" she asked.

"He's able to sit up," I replied, pointing to Shorty.

The young lady came over to the bed and laid her cool hand on my forehead.

"You're much better this morning," she said. "Your temperature has gone down."

"Yes, but it isn't filling," I replied. "I didn't even know it was down, and I'm sure there still is room for a tank of coffee and a real meal."

The minute she laughed I got her number. I placed her right away, and then wondered how on earth I could have forgotten her. She was the maid at Steiger's rooming-house.

Of course I didn't know her very well, but I'd seen her often enough so that there was no excuse for my having been unable to place her. I guess I must have been pretty much off-center when she first appeared on the scene.

"I'll see if I can hurry along your oats and toast," she said, and disappeared through the door into the hall which I later came to know as the lead to the bread-and-bean chute.

When I was sure she couldn't cut in on the wire, I checked out an L. C. L. of interrogation-points for Shorty.

"When did little Bright Eyes change over to this division?"

"She was waiting at the switch when they brought you in from Morrowton. You know they are short on trained nurses since the call went out for hero hostlers," Shorty replied.

"She was working at Steiger's rooming-house, wasn't she?"

"You ought to know," Shorty replied.

"Of course she was," I continued. "She had been there about a month. I just wanted to be sure that my memory was holding the rails. Who's her gentleman friend?"

"The only time I ever saw her out in society Zeke Stuart was stepping on her feet at the trainmen's dance. It seems like the better looking they are the quicker they fall for some ham with—"

"Let's don't get into politics, Shorty," I interrupted. "I want to know who called on her here last night."

"No one called on her here last night," Shorty said, with a show of sarcasm in his words. "You don't seem to understand that this is a hospital, not a matrimonial bureau."

"I'm telling you a man called here last night and this—you've been around here long enough to know her real name, haven't you?"

"Clark."

"Miss or married?"

"Don't know," said Shorty. "Anyhow, what's that got to do with the price of beans? Doc calls her 'miss,' but that may be some of this camouflage stuff."

"A fellow ought to be enough of a gentleman to give her the benefit of the doubt," I said. "This Miss Clark and her visitor, at an hour late enough to suggest there was something serious between them, were right over there by the window talking in such a subdued tone that it was a

sure bet they didn't care if nobody heard what they were saying."

"You saw a lot of things yesterday and last night that no one else could discover," Shorty volunteered. "The best thing you can do, Dave, is to forget everything you thought you saw and heard last night."

It looked as if Shorty wouldn't take me seriously until I shocked him into it, so I made up my mind to convince him that I was in my right mind even though I may have been out of my head.

That would have been some job with a fellow whose mind was under cultivation, to say nothing of Shorty, who sometimes acted as if his brain was semiarid and without an irrigation system.

"Take that intellect of yours," I said, "in both hands, and see if you can make it follow what I'm saying. Granted that my normal state is crazy, if something happens that puts me out of my head, of course that makes me sane. Do you get that?"

Shorty didn't seem to have the hook ready to snatch in that bag of mail, so I explained:

"If a man is crazy, and he gets out of his head, the only place he can get is into his right mind. Very simple, that!

"If there is an engine standing in a patch of landscape and the hoghead gets off the engine, he gets into the landscape, and then, if he gets off the landscape he gets back on the engine. Don't it?"

"Yes," Shorty admitted grudgingly, "it don't."

"If you can understand that, and if you believe I'm normally crazy, you'll see at once and without goggles that when I get out of my mind I'm perfectly sane.

"All right, now, assuming I was out of my mind yesterday and last night, then for once in my life I was sane, and I'm telling you that while I was perfectly sane I saw Miss Clark and a man seated there at the table by the window, and that I heard part of their conversation."

"I can't understand it," Shorty protested.

"Of course you can't," I said hotly. "I'll bet my last month's pay-check against a coal-ticket that you can't understand why it is an engine turns round when you run it over the Y. You just take it from Dave Kendall that this young woman and a man were talking there at the window last night; late last night, too."

"Well, suppose they were?" queried Shorty.

"Yes, suppose they were," I continued; "and then suppose they were talking about this accident as if it had been planned, and then suppose they said something that suggested to me that they thought I had had a hand in planning it, and after you get through supposing, you tell me what you think about it."

"I think you need that doctor again," said Shorty, and got out of his chair and started for the door.

"Back up, Shorty; back up!" I said quickly, and in a tone which even he couldn't mistake. "Just forget about the pill-roller. As sure as I'm here in this little cot I'm about to check over on a shipment of trouble I haven't ordered.

"I'm going to try to get the jump on it and put out a tracer to find the real consignee and the shipper. The first information I must have is the train-book record on this gentleman friend of Miss Clark's.

"I've got a notion that he isn't a friend of mine. You just get busy and see what you can find out about him."

Just then Miss Clark returned, carrying a tray on which was almost a nickel's worth of food. I was so astonished over the thought that any one would rob the canary-bird of its breakfast and offer it to a regular engineer, six feet and two inches without his cap on, I failed to observe that the doctor and Miss Clark's caller of the night before had followed her into the room.

I made a very careful inspection of the dishes on the tray, trying to discover food. When I glanced up I saw our visitor.

"This won't do me any good, Miss Clark," I said. "Perhaps you ought to serve it to our company."

She laughed, and told me it was "all mine," and then I started a game of my own by looking her squarely in the face and saying:

"I don't know exactly what I'm accused of, but you might just as well shoot me at sunrise as to starve me to death."

She didn't get red in the face, didn't bat an eyelash. Any one watching her would have noticed nothing unusual, but there was just the slightest narrowing of her eyes, a sudden fixing of them on mine, a little bit bolder and harder glance than a nurse, as a rule, gives a patient.

She knew I was making my first move in a new game, and I was sure, for the first time, that there was a game, and that I hadn't started it, but would have to be one of the players whether I would or not.

"Mr. Arthur, of the personal injury department, wishes to talk with you," said Miss Clark, and there was nothing in the least unusual in her voice.

"Everybody seems to know more about this accident than I do," I replied; "but I'll be glad to talk to him. In the mean time, Shorty, will you be good enough to go over to my room and get the pile of papers in the top drawer of the dresser? This will be a good time to clean up on my correspondence."

"If there is no hurry about the papers, I'd like to have Mr. Davis remain here," cut in the Arthur person.

"I'll be glad to go and get the papers," volunteered Miss Clark.

"No," I said, "we'll let Shorty go. He needs the exercise, and he can be back here in fifteen minutes."

I was sure this didn't at all suit my nurse and Mr. Arthur, and if I found a delight in this fact it can be attributed, perhaps, to the contrary streak which develops in most sick persons. Arthur acted as if he wanted to say something, but he hadn't decided just what it was before Doc and Shorty went out the door.

CHAPTER III.

WITHOUT A SWITCH LIST.

IF having all the blank reports and knowing how to fill them out makes one a personal-injury claim-agent, this man Arthur was all he represented to be. He went about the job of filling in the reports just as if he was checking up a pile of creosoted ties or a shipment of fish-plates and angle bars.

He didn't watch me half as closely as I did him. As for any feeling or interest in his questioning he might just as well have been a phonograph.

We recorded my present history, forecasted the future, and went far enough back that we were in sight of the missing link before Arthur so much as looked at me. When we got down to a description of myself he looked up from the report-blank a couple of times, and in those hasty glances I was surprised that he discovered marks on my face I hadn't discovered in thirty-six years of close association with it, and I wasn't any place near as interested in the scar on my left arm as he was.

I may look like a simple person who doesn't know much more than enough to put an engine in forward and then *hoss* her back again, but this Mr. Arthur person didn't have me fooled a bit.

With that record in his hands I knew it wouldn't be safe for me to be caught within telegraph distance of a hen-house, and while the information he gathered may have found its way to the personal injury claim department, I'm willing to bet a bean or two that it was on file with every special agent in the government's employ long before I was able to climb out of my cute little white bed and get back to my natural environment including my denim pajamas.

If there had been the least doubt about it in my mind it would have vanished when, just as we were down to that part of the report which had to do with what I could tell about the accident in which I had been involved, one Shorty Davis rushed into the room, causing as much confusion as would a freight-train that tried to get into a crowded yard sidewise instead of head on.

"Dave," exclaimed Shorty, "somebody's robbed you."

"Well, Shorty," I replied, "there is some compensation in being so poor that when some one tells you you've been robbed you can lay back easy and comfortable like and know you ain't lost nothing."

"Every drawer in your dresser had been gone through," continued Shorty, as excited as if he had just saved the life of the

pumpkin blonde in a sawmill scene. "All those papers are missing and—"

"Let the O. S. and D. clerk worry," I replied. "One of those files had been passed up to me to explain why the 779 coughed out enough fire to cook about a half car-load of canned tomatoes. Another one wanted to know why I couldn't make passenger time with a coal drag, and the third one was a gentle suggestion from the master mechanic that I didn't know a great deal about lubricating oils. Whoever stole that bunch of trouble has my sympathy."

While I was chattering to Shorty I was watching this Arthur person like a hog-head watches ahead for smoke when he's on the other fellow's time, and a half mile from the switch.

Arthur wasn't excited about it at all. He was just too cool! You know a driving-box that's working right wants to warm up just a bit when you're wheeling them hard!

There wasn't any heat in Arthur. He didn t even ask as many as one question about the incident, and I concluded that he, just as I, knew that under the circumstances—one of which being that little conversation between my nurse and a soft-spoken gentleman there by the window—no one should get excited if it were discovered that some one had gone through my room.

If any one was embarrassed by Shorty's precipitate disclosure of the raid, it was Miss Clark. Somehow I felt that she got out of the room too quickly when she realized that Shorty had returned from the house empty-handed.

"You have all the information you need, haven't you?" I finally asked Arthur.

"For the present, yes," he replied. "Of course you'll have to sign the usual release before you go back to work."

"And get the usual dollar," I volunteered. "Yes, I understand all that. In the mean time you have a clearance card to pull out 'most any time you want to.

"I'm tired, and won't mind being alone for an hour or two. If, after you get away, and have time to think it over, you find there are other things you would like to know, just remember that while there are several ways of getting information, the easy way is to come up to a man face to face and ask him for it."

That one side-swiped him. He looked at me pretty hard just for a second or two, and I'll admit that he had a pair of eyes that made a fellow feel they could see a long way.

"You mean?" he questioned.

"Oh, he's just crabbing!" Shorty exclaimed. "When he's well he's the champeen crabber on this pike. Don't mind his popping off."

Arthur laughed. It was the kind of a laugh you pick up in a theater

"At any rate, Mr. Kendall," he said, "I hope you'll be about soon and none the worse for your experience."

"Thanks," I replied. "If there's any permanent injury to my anatomy, the company'll have to settle and, of course, if there's any permanent injury to my reputation I'll be looking for some one to make a proper settlement for that, too."

Shorty shoved in about that time with some remark about it being impossible to ruin an engineer's reputation, because none of them ever had any, and in the confusion incident to Shorty's saying something smart Arthur made his getaway. He was no more than out of sight than Shorty began on me

"Can't you act civilized? You know there is a lot of difference between the people about a hospital and those who make up a section-gang or a switch-crew. If that claim-agent plugs the works so you don't get a red cent for being mussed up it will serve you right. Can't you understand—"

"Torpedoes and fusees for you, Shorty," I interrupted. "I can understand, but you can't. This Arthur individual is no more a claim-agent than I am the general manager of the New York Central. Are you marked up to go out to-night?"

"I'm laying off."

"Why?" I asked.

"Just to see that some one doesn't set out a fist on your nose when you're down and out and can't keep a civil tongue in your head."

"That's nice of you, Shorty," I said; "but I'm so much better that I'll be able

to take care of myself for a day or two if I don't see any one.

"If you really want to help out go make a round trip, keep your mouth shut, and show up here when you get back."

"Don't you want me to report to the police about some one being in your room?" he asked

"Forget that, too," I advised him. "Just run along now and fatten up your pay-check, because I may really need you when you get back."

After making some scurrilous remark about my having the intelligence of a caboose stove and the disposition of an emery wheel, Shorty left me to two nights and three days of uninterrupted thought.

I say uninterrupted thought because, while Miss Clark frequently came into the room, she was so much a part of the thinking that she made no break in it.

Aside from Miss Clark I didn't have very much to make thought out of, when I got down to rock bottom. The first thing I was sure of was that there had been an accident.

To show just how sure I was of this, the second conclusion I checked off was that it hadn't been an accident at all—accidents are not planned; like falling in love, they just happen.

For that reason, after twenty-four hours of mental shuffling of high and low ones without a switch list to go by, I had to assume that there had been a plot to blow up a car of ammunition, and the plot had been successful.

I ran that assumption onto the turntable of my mind and turned it about a dozen times; I ran it around the Y, backed it up, shoved it ahead, turned it over, put it on the rip track and took it apart and rebuilt it trying to find out just where I fit in.

As far as I could discover I fit in like the fifth wheel on a four-wheeled caboose.

Another day of heavy thinking and I was coupled on to one car that seemed to be meant for my train: that man who had called on Miss Clark had said something about my carrying notes for Steiger.

Having known Steiger for six or seven years, and having carried notes for him ever since I went to running on the main line, there was no deep, dark mystery about that circumstance. All there was to it was that Steiger had a friend in the restaurant business in Morrowton who did much of Steiger's buying for the latter's boarding-house.

There isn't the beginning of a mystery in a shopping list on which were such frank, open-faced items as canned corn, eggs, onions, potatoes, hams, and bacon.

Why didn't Steiger send his orders down to Morrowton by mail?

Steiger himself is the answer. Why spend two cents for a postage stamp when Dave Kendall would carry a note?

"Two cents? Vat ees it, yet? Two per cent on von dollar, yes!" That's Steiger.

Any one who can live, grow fat, and save from a thousand to fifteen hundred dollars a year on operating a railroad rooming-house doesn't buy postage stamps just for the fun of it, and doesn't pay express charges when his engineer friend can carry his packages!

In Steiger's vegetable orders there was nothing to be excited about when you knew Steiger and his ways, and yet, if I was going to get myself mixed up in this plot to blow up ammunition shipments, it looked as if I'd have to get in by way of Steiger's notes.

Knowing Steiger well enough to stand him off from one pay-day to the next for room and board, not to mention borrowing a five-spot from him semioccasionally, I was sure I knew just the line of attack to make him admit that he was something I knew he wasn't.

I had plenty of time to get definitely in my mind my program before Shorty checked in from a round trip on the west end.

He showed up about nine bells in the morning, and I had his orders waiting for him.

"I want to see 'Dutch' Steiger," I began. "You go over and tell him to be here at ten o'clock."

"How much shall he bring with him?" Shorty asked.

"It's not a touch I'm after," I explained. "I want to talk to him. Tell him I need

some advice and he'll make the running time, because if there's one thing Steiger likes to do it is give advice."

"I'll get him over here," Shorty said; "but I'm not taking on the job of getting him away. He'll talk an arm off of you."

"Don't worry. I'll take care of him after he gets here," I told Shorty. "Your job will be to keep Miss Clark away from this part of the building while Steiger's in here. I've got private and personal business with the Dutchman and don't want to be interrupted."

The limited didn't have anything on my landlord for being right on time. He came puffing in, a good deal of his past record extending out in front of him, so to speak, and eased his two hundred and sixty pounds into a chair.

He seemed to be so pleased to see me that for a moment I wondered if I owed him any money.

"Vat ees it, Dave, I can do by you?" he asked when his air-pump had slowed down a little. "You don't so seeck look to me. How ees it for one thick porterhouse mit some onions by the top of it?"

I looked about to see that all the doors in the room were closed, and that Shorty had made his getaway. I listened to see if I could hear any one moving about either on the veranda or in the halls.

Then I began to unload on Steiger a shipment of junk I knew he hadn't ordered and ought not to be expected to receive.

"You can't do anything for me, Steiger," I began, and then in as accusing a tone as I could command, "you've done enough."

"Vat ees it? Done enough?" he asked.

"Yes," I continued. "You've got me mixed up in your pro-German stuff, and "

"Pro-Churman!" he exclaimed, as the scarlet began to show in his fat face. "Who ees it? Vat? Vhy does it? Vot ees it, Dave, you say by me, I'm pro-Churman?"

"You were born in Germany, and—"

"*Mein Gott*, man, didn't I move away as soon as I found it out? Don't I bring my mother und father away? Don't my son Adolph been second lieutenant in Uncle Sam's army already in France, and don't I offer him everything vat is mine already, if he make the Kaiser eat a bomb?"

"That's all right for conversation," I cut in. "Just take my tip, Steiger, and don't talk so loud, because some one's apt to hear you, and they know about you over here."

"Know about me, ees it?" he sputtered. "Vat ees it they know about me? Don't I been here for fifteen years? Don't I get my naturalizationment papers as quick as I can?

"Don't I vote always the Republican ticket, unt don't even speak to Democrats until th' Democrats get a President to fight th' Kaiser?

"Know about me, vat else? Liberty Bonds two thousand dollars, already. War Stamps ten dollars every week. Red Cross, how much? I say, how much by the Red Cross, Dave?"

"I guess that's none of my business, and—"

"Of course eet's none of your business, but how much for the Red Cross, just the same already, Dave? Vat do I say to Steiger? I say Liberty Bonds—that ees nothing to brag of. Invest your money unt get it back mit a lot of interest for letting the government have my money long enough to help my boy Adolph make the Kaiser look like a porous plaster!

"Savings Stamps! Is that for the country doing somedings? No, that ees for Steiger. All my money back und interest.

"For the Red Cross, huh, that ees something to do. For the Red Cross one thousand dollars, unt I don't even feel bad about it.

"Because vhy? Because I like to live in Churmany on clabber unt rye bread unt be knocked down twice by a soldier unt I don't dare hit him mit a brick or not'ing?"

"Now, Steiger, just turn off the spigot on that talk for a minute," I suggested, "and listen to what I'm going to tell you. You've been sending notes down to Morrowton by me. What was in those notes?"

"Vhy, not'ings but eggs, lettuce, onions, whatever it is, is in 'em. You always can read what is in 'em for almost five years."

"Yes, I know I can read what is in them," I replied, rather sarcastically; "but what I want to know is just what eggs and lettuce and onions mean, and—"

"Dave, are you already gone crazy?" Steiger interrupted, leaning toward me. "Vat else means eggs than just eggs? Spring chickens, maybe, huh? Vot is all about this foolishness?"

No one will ever be able to make me believe that the German blood is sluggish and stolid—at least not after it has been transplanted to an American setting. I had a merry time with Steiger that afternoon, and once or twice it was all I could do to keep him from hanging a chair on my think tank.

By getting him mad one minute, and cooling him down the next; by bullying him in one breath and coaxing him in the next, I finally got him to understand that I was sure he and I were suspected and were in the same car.

For a time it seemed impossible to make him understand that I could be sure we were suspected and, at the same time, know so little about what we were suspected of. I had a close call when I tried to indicate that perhaps we were under suspicion of complicity in such grave misconduct as plotting to blow up ammunition cars.

When he comprehended what I was trying to say, he got out of his chair as quickly as a two-hundred-and-sixty-pound cube could move; he seized up the chair as if he meant business.

"Dave Kendall, who ees if says so? Ees it you, vat to me says it? Say it once more already und I vill knock the brains from your head vat ain't there.

"I can vip the man vat says it. Dave, I can vip him!"

After I had him tamed down again I started in to get over with the main thing. By slacking him ahead and backing him up and handling him carefully all the time, I got him to see that perhaps some one was using him and me.

I pointed out to him that it was our duty, and in interest of our own self-protection, too, to find out whether or not we had had an unwilling hand in a plot of any kind, and when he once got the slant that we might, perhaps, render a real service to the government if we went out and uncovered a German agent or two, he began to show real enthusiasm.

I told him to go home and put in some time thinking over the situation. I suggested that he reflect on who, if any one, might have been interested in the notes he had sent to Morrowton with me; to go over the list of persons with whom he had come in contact since war was declared, and to see if any of them had talked or invited talk of a disloyal nature.

I told him to think lots and talk little, and whatever he found out, or to whatever conclusion he came, to keep it in the clear on the house-track until I could get out and talk to him.

He got my signals all right, and I felt sure he would keep on his string of waits until I could get out and do the train despatching for both of us. When I was sure he was primed and ready for road service, I invited him to get himself rolling toward his own roundhouse.

He shook hands as he was leaving, and I could see that he was as excited as a tallow-pot who is going up for examination for a place on the right-hand side of the cab.

"If you've got to be seek a long time, Dave," he said, "I hope you don't. Vy don't you be worse for a couple of days und then be over mit it? Can I send over nothings for you to eat?"

I assured him that the fare at the hospital would keep me going, and expressed the belief that I would be out in a few days, and he started toward the door. His hand was on the knob when he stopped and looked back at me, and his expression was one of doubt and perplexity.

"What's wrong now?" I asked.

He came back and leaned over the bed.

"Dave, I like you, already for a long time. Sometimes it ees like you can't belief nobody. Vat all you say leave it to Steiger to do just like that. But Dave, vat ees it I do if I find you ain't by the government, Dave?"

"Yes," I said. "I understand. Suppose you discover I'm not for the government, what then?"

"Vy, Dave, I'm so pro-Churman," he said very slowly as he looked me straight in the eyes, "if I found my best friend, already, vas fighting my boy unt the govern-

ment in the back, I would turn him over quick to the officials to shoot him if—"

"If what, Steiger?"

"If I couldn't find a gun."

Steiger waddled out the door leaving me behind to admit to myself that while I had lined up an ally I had awakened a determination which had in it an element of menace. I knew for a certainty that if, any place along the line, my words or actions aroused Steiger's suspicion—well, Steiger meant what he said.

Just for a minute I wondered if the prudent course was to drop the whole matter. Knowing that I was innocent, why not go about my business knowing, if occasion arose, I could clear myself? Immediately, almost, it came to me that it was too late to drop the matter.

To back up would be cause enough for Steiger to act. He would want to know why. I realized I had no explanation that would impress him as reasonable.

I was wondering how long it would be before Shorty would discover that my guest had gone, when I thought I heard a faint click as if some one was quietly pulling home the latch on the door to the right of my bed. I listened and was sure I heard a faint sound beyond the door.

Ignoring the aches, I slipped out of bed and my six feet two inches of pajama-clad anatomy slipped along the wall until I could reach the door knob.

When I opened the door Miss Clark seemed to be busy with the linen chest which stood at the left of the hall.

CHAPTER IV.

RUNNING FAST AND GETTING NO PLACE.

MISS CLARK assured me, with a very fine pretense of sincerity, that I was jeopardizing my life by getting out of bed. The assurance did not conceal altogether her embarrassment.

I made no reply to her chatter but, having refused to be stared out of countenance, closed the door and wabbled back to bed, wondering how a man could feel so rickety when there appeared to be no flaws in his frame.

By the time Shorty Davis came in to explain that all the time he was supposed to be piloting Miss Clark away from my end of the yard, she had had him chasing all over town looking for bone knitting-needles, I had arrived at a conclusion which gave me the determination necessary for a speedy recovery.

It was as plain as an electric headlight on a straightaway track that I couldn't get much of any place playing the game when they had me in a hospital stall with the switch locked, especially when I had not the least idea as to what the game really was.

Before I could do plain or fancy running it was up to me to get back on my trucks and out on the main-line rails. Steiger, and Shorty, too, for that matter, couldn't be much use in helper service until they had something to help.

From that time on I tried to forget that Miss Clark might not be what she seemed to be, and while I didn't go to sleep at the switch by any means, I tried to encourage the belief on her part that I didn't object to working on the same crew with her. I'm willing to admit that, for a woman, she was perfectly satisfactory company and once or twice I tried to make myself believe, if I worked at the job, I might get to the place where I would think as much of her as I did of the 779.

Considering the fact that most women don't know much more than the price of ribbon and the shortest route to the ten-cent store, Miss Clark was unusually intelligent. I was convinced there were times when she understood what I was talking about, and two or three times I understood what she was talking about.

One evening we got to talking about explosives and before I knew it she had me climbing a telegraph pole looking for the nearest station where I could cut in and get help from the trainmaster's office. That evening we talked about every kind of explosive from a cap pistol to a volcano, and if the fellow who invented them knew anything more about them than she did he was underpaid and overworked.

There wasn't anything in the Standard Book of Rules on explosives from face

powder to nitroglycerin she didn't know. Why, she handled endothermic and exothermic compounds just as if they were a nickel's worth of chewing gum and, as far as I know, perhaps they are!

After we had had five or six evenings together I knew Miss Clark was fitted for better things than being the maid at Steiger's boarding house or nurse to the bad orders which are shoved in on the hospital track. One evening she got to talking about the war and when she talked of Verdun and the French soldiers, such a flush came to her face and such a light in her eyes that I began to feel it was tough luck I wasn't born in France.

After she left me that night I decided that it was time for me to make my getaway from the hospital before I lost my independence and most of my monthly pay check.

To begin with there was nothing seriously the matter with me. Doc tried to make me think I'd had a close call, explaining that the explosion had caused something approximating a vacuum, outside of me or inside, I don't remember which, and as a result of whatever it was, I came near exploding.

Of course it takes a doctor to charge real money for a cock-and-bull story like that, but since the company was paying the bill and Miss Clark was doing most of the entertaining, I made out as if I believed all the pill pilot told me and let it go at that.

Two weeks were enough for me to recover from what I called my case of shell shock. While Doc permitted me to have a clearance to pull out of the hospital he refused to permit me to return to work immediately, and as a result I had a little time to visit with Steiger.

Also I got hold of the newspapers which told of the explosion in the Morrowton yard and I read every word printed in them two or three times, trying to discover some circumstance that would lead me to suspect myself of having been implicated in the plot- if it was a plot.

As far as discovering evidence against myself went, I got as far as Steiger did. While both of us did a fair job of fast running we didn't get much of any place.

The only thing Steiger discovered by checking back on his train-book record of the orders I had carried over to Morrowton for him was that on three occasions he had ordered eggs for " Rainbow " Stebbins.

Rainbow Stebbins was a clerk of some kind over in the department of bridges and buildings. The responsibility of his job weighed so heavily on his shoulders that he stood up straight like the circumference of a driving wheel.

As a human semicircle he was a regular person. Not only did he seem to be suffering from exaggerated curvature of the back bone, he had a bad case of ingrown conversation. If ever he said ten words in a string the last five of them he said to himself.

Bill Smith, who put in all his time between runs threading fishworms on a hook and telling about the big bass that got away, said that Rainbow looked like a cane pole just when you try to heave a four-pounder out of the water.

Everybody liked Rainbow as much as he would permit, but it seemed as if none of us could get close to him. Perhaps he was afraid some one would try to straighten him and, maybe, break him in two at the waist line.

He registered in on the pike just after the first army draft had cleaned out several clerks in the bridge and building department and over there they said he was a wizard.

Before he had been on the job a month as a draftsman he knew more about the family history of every tie, fish-plate and bridge-timber on the division than did the superintendent of the department, and when, by some sort of an accident, one of the boys discovered him spending most of his pay check on the Marlin family Stub Marlin having been a poor provider when he was living and working extra on the east end until his hog rolled over in a soft piece of track and put an end to Stub's career of hard luck—all of us were strong for Rainbow.

There wasn't a man running into Morrowton who wasn't glad of a chance to bring back a basket of eggs and butter for Steiger when he explained they were for Rainbow, knowing that since he didn't eat

much but spaghetti, being so thin that he couldn't swallow much else, the provisions we brought in for him found their way to the Martin family's pantry and table.

Steiger's record of helping out Rainbow didn't suggest anything like a 19 order for our conspiracy run, and by the time my landlord and I had put in three nights hunting evidence against ourselves without getting anything that promised as much as a hung jury, not to mention a verdict of guilty, we decided if we were going to be sent to jail some one else would have to switch out the case against us.

Finally I got desperate and decided I'd go over to the hospital and have a frank talk with Miss Clark. Maybe, after all, I had an imagination that was meant for poetry rather than detective work!

At any rate I proposed to pass it up to Miss Clark pretty cold, first, that she wasn't just what she represented herself as being, and second, that if I was a crook and a plotter some one would have to help me to prove it.

Doc was spotted on the bench just off the main lead in the long yard before the hospital, when I shoved over the switch. He gave me a slow sign and when I had eased in alongside him on the bench he asked how I was feeling.

After telling him I didn't know if it was any one's business I asked if Miss Clark was at liberty, and he said he hoped she was because she had resigned her run the day before.

Miss Clark had gone hence, so to speak.

With Miss Clark out of town, there being no excuse for me to prolong my vacation, I walked over to the roundhouse and told the foreman he could make me up. Of course he told me I'd have to have the master-mechanic's order and the master mechanic said he couldn't put me back to work until I had signed the usual release for the company.

The agent said he couldn't sign up with me until headquarters had O. K.'d the papers and that would take five or six days —and there I was with my appetite working overtime and the rent going on!

When I went out from the agent's office I drifted along the rip track to see if I could find Smoke Johnson, the day hostler, who, during the spare moments, taught a class made up of members of the pit gang the fine points of pinocle at so much per point or per ocle, whichever it is.

Besides being a good hostler and an expert pinocle player in a modest way, Smoke was good for a touch now and then if he had you on his list of friends, and I wanted to see if he still thought well of me, seeing as how it was eleven days until payday.

The game was on in the shade of the coal chute and I had to stand by and be the bleachers for an hour before I could get the evidence that Smoke had ten dollars' worth of friendship for me. That was the only pleasant event of the day and, surprising as it was, it lacked about four driving wheels and a pony truck of being as big as the surprise checked out to me when I wandered back to the master-mechanic's office, explained that, since it would be five or six days before my release papers were returned from headquarters, I would like to go over to Morrowton for a few days and—got turned down on a pass!

That was the car that broke them in two! Maybe Steiger and I couldn't prove it, but there wasn't any doubt in my mind but that if I hadn't done something wrong, I might just as well have done it because I was in bad all the way 'round.

Nobody had to tell me they needed men on the road. They wouldn't have been tangling me in red tape and thereby depriving themselves of the service of the best engineer on the pike if there was nothing more than signing up a set of personal-injury release papers involved. They just wouldn't permit me to work and they wouldn't permit me to leave town!

Dave Kendall—that being me, myself began to get choked up in the stack. I think I was foaming a little as I went down through the yards, following the house track most of the way, cutting across to Steiger's.

I knew I was going to be in Morrowton the next morning if I had to walk and the only possible chance of making me walk was to stop all the trains going in that direction. If I couldn't find a brother eagle-

eye who would carry me I wasn't above taking the upper berth in a stock car for one night.

I was going to Morrowton and I was going at the company's expense, because it stands to reason that a fellow wouldn't spend Smoke Johnson's ten dollars on anything as useless as a railroad ticket.

The farther down the yard I got the more I foamed. I was about to the place where I would have been pulling up spikes and biting them into bits to relieve myself, when I heard some one running on the far side of the string standing on No. 1, that being the track on which they made up most of the long drags for Morrowton and east.

I was in the proper frame of mind to carry on a conversation with the yardmaster in such fashion as to square up for some of the extra tonnage he had hung on me at one time and another. I bent down so I could see under the string, knowing that one look at his feet would tell me whether the yardmaster was in a hurry for fear some engine would get out of the yard without full tonnage.

I got only a fleeting glimpse. If it was the yardmaster he was wearing skirts.

I'm not saying that wouldn't have been proper on the old granny and, being determined not to miss the gladsome vision if he was wearing skirts, I slipped in between two cars, swung up on the drawheads and leaned over until I could peek around the corner of the furniture car on my left.

If it wasn't the yardmaster, it was Miss Clark and she was just stepping in between the cars at the other end of the furniture car. What was more she was carrying a small bundle with her, as if she might be traveling.

In addition to that she was dressed like a poor relation. And besides all that, what business had she climbing in between cars just as if she was trying to beat some poor shack out of his pickings?

I decided to find out what was going on. When a fellow makes a decision to mix in a woman's business he can write it on his trip-slip in advance that he and trouble are going to meet some place along the line—probably on a short siding where neither he nor trouble can get in the clear.

Big Dave Kendall, the same being me myself, free born and more than twenty-one years old, climbed to the top of the furniture car, quiet like a second-story worker calling on a rich maiden lady. I wiggled along the running board on my bay window, so to speak, until I was far enough over to get a peek at the end door in the car just ahead

The first time I peeked the door was closed. Just as I started to wiggle nearer the end of the box car I heard a noise, and immediately I gave an imitation of a bo hugging the top of the varnished wagon as the string pulls into a train-shed.

While doing my best to make my six feet two invisible, I listened. Some one was working on that end door of the car ahead. It creaked a little and then grated as if it was being pushed back.

For several minutes I didn't dare to take a peek for fear of being discovered. More creaking and grating, followed by quite a spell of silence, and when I got up my nerve to take a look, the end door was closed and there was no one in sight.

I backed up and in doing so came near puncturing my casing and inner tube on a tenpenny nail that was sticking up in the running board. After I had uncoupled myself from the nail I climbed down from the car, began to whistle in a careless, nonchalant minor key, and walked down the string, being careful to grab the number on the car into which, I did not doubt, my little nurse had climbed.

As I was passing the side door of that car I got a regular shock. One of these red posters was on it, and on the red background, in letters that you could read a mile away and around the corner was the word "Explosives."

It didn't seem to me quite proper that my nurse girl should be keeping company with a cluster of explosives, and I walked down to the lower end of the yard and back again trying to figure out what the game might be. By the time I was back to the car with the danger flag on it, I had made up my mind that while I had not been invited to set in on the game I'd try to get at least a white chip on the table, even if I did no more than ante it away.

The goat was coming through on No 2 track with Sandy Bennett's dog-house. I drifted on up the track toward the eating-house and got filled a requisition for a half dozen sinkers, three sandwiches and a couple of oranges, because I never like to get out on a run without being protected against a late arrival at a bean chute.

I stuck around until Sandy came up from checking the string to get his way-bills and orders, and when Dippy Moore backed the 828 down on the string I shuffled that way to tell Moore a funny story and sneak down on the far side of the string until I spotted that P. D. car with the bomb sign on it.

After the car whackers had finished with their stunt and Dippy Moore had given up the two short and taken the slack on the string, I swung up between the furniture car and that corral of explosives and tried the end door.

Of course it wouldn't open.

I climbed the end ladder and appropriated the brake wheel at the end of the car as my reserved seat. I had two reasons for this; first I wanted to decorate the top of the car as it passed the master-mechanic's office just to show somebody I could ride without transportation and, second, I didn't know what else to do and wanted to have a minute or two to think.

Big Ben Walker, chief custodian of the dog-house for Sandy Bennett, came drifting over the tops, as we pulled out. At first I thought I'd take Big Ben into the game and tell him he had a passenger in the furniture car, but I thought better of that by the time he had reached me.

Like as not Ben would want to collect the regular fare from the passenger and that didn't impress me as a proper procedure when the passenger was a woman and, whatever else she may have been, my nurse

"'Lo, Dave!" exclaimed Ben when he had arrived at my end of the furniture car. "What's the idea?"

"Just had nothing to do and couldn't stay away from the cars," I replied.

"Where 're you goin'?"

"I don't care," I replied. "Guess I'll go until you or Bennett make me hit the cinders. Where are you going for No. 31?"

"All depends on the hoghead," replied Ben, handing me one. "She's two hours late. Time enough to register in at Morrowton and be washed up before 31 pulls out; but I suppose Dillerton's restaurant at Plainfield will be about as far as we can expect Dippy Moore to go.

"You know, this is the blueberry pie season and Dippy has to have his blueberry pie whether school keeps or not."

"I don't refuse blueberry pie, myself," I told Ben. "Since there's some inducement offered—guess I'll go as far as Plainfield. Anybody back in the watch-tower?"

"Sandy Bennett."

"I mean any regular person?" I explained

"The human pin wheel from the bridge and building department."

"You mean Rainbow Stebbins?"

"Yep, Old Semicircle! He's going down to Cannelton, where they are building a new tipple for the Stalworth mines. We've got a couple of cars of timber to set out there."

Ben and I had some more conversation that didn't amount to anything. Most conversations with rear shacks don't amount to much because they know it all, and a common engineer can't tell them anything because they do all the talking, meaning of course the rear shack does the talking.

Ben started over ahead and when he stepped onto the next car—force of habit, I suppose—he looked back at the end door of the furniture car on which I was perched.

He motioned for me to step over on the car he was on and when I didn't move he stepped back to the furniture car.

"Say, you big boob!" he yelled at me. "A round trip in the hospital would teach anybody but an engineer not to hang around a car of explosives. Don't you know you're sitting on the front porch of eternity?"

With that he made haste to get back on the car ahead and just to show him that I had a careless, daring nature, I laughed and remained where I was. Finally he turned and wabbled his way toward the cinder end and a few minutes later, after I had climbed down and tried that end door again, I wabbled my way back toward

the caboose, staying out on top so that I could watch that furniture car.

Cannelton was the first stop and I watched alone that far. Bennett must have been busy signing way-bills, because he didn't hit the cushions in the cupola.

Rainbow Stebbins didn't show himself, either, until we stopped at Cannelton, when he swung off the side door and started ahead toward the mine tipple, which was a few car lengths beyond the station on the north-mine track.

Being of a rainbow build, when Stebbins walked he seemed to be looking at his feet. At any rate, unless he had rolled himself onto his back he couldn't have looked up to the top of the cars.

He didn't see me, and having nothing trivial on my mind that would interest him, I didn't say anything to him; just went about my own business, the same being to keep both eyes on that furniture car.

Bennett swung off the caboose on the side of the string farther away from the station and, as he went ahead, kept in close enough so that he could feel for hot boxes as he walked along.

When both Rainbow and Bennett were ten or twelve car lengths up ahead, I started over the tops so that I might be a little better able to watch that furniture car while it was standing still. As far as I knew, Miss Clark was in that car and, as far as I knew a second time, she wouldn't get out of it while it was rolling.

She might get out of it while it was on the spot and if she did—well, I wanted some one acquainted with her to meet and welcome her wherever she got off.

But Miss Clark's hat check didn't call for Cannelton, or else she went to sleep and got carried by her station. If only she had climbed out of that car then and there, I might, in due season, have returned to the peaceful occupation of wrestling the Johnson bar on a freight hog, and lived in be a respected citizen in the community in spite of occasional clusters of coal dust in my ears.

But when we pulled into the straight-away west of Plainfield, rolling them thirty-five miles an hour to keep that date with a blueberry pie at Dillerton's restaurant, a furniture car about half way over to the head end jumped the rails. When the kindling wood quit piling up, Big Dave Kendall, the same being me, had to be the first person to arrive at the apex of the unpleasantness.

When I discovered four cars mixed into an omelet, the said furniture car being the *om*, so to speak, just for a minute or two I forgot the possibility of their being fifty-seven varieties of explosives sprinkled over the landscape. I started in to excavate whatever remained of my former nurse.

Of course I might as well have tried to turn over a tandem compound with a pinch bar as to get to the bottom of that pile of wreckage with only bare hands for tools' But I was at the job just as if I expected to get some place, when Bennett came up on the run from the doghouse and Dippy Moore, tremulously, like a lump of jelly freshly turned from a fat glass, wabbled back from the head end to find out which one of life's uncertainties had overtaken him.

Neither Bennett nor Moore knew I was on the train until they found me there trying to turn over the omelet

"As usual," Dippy Moore exclaimed as he laid his fat hand on my shoulder and turned me round, "you and Bad Luck are strolling hand in hand. Where 'd you come from?"

"What did you do to them?" Bennett asked, in that tool-house barytone of his. "Pull the air hose while they were running?"

I looked at them and they looked at me and then the three of us looked at the hill of trouble.

"Well, don't stand there with your mouth open till your teeth warp," Dippy finally said. "Say something and don't look so *scairt!*"

"I believe there was a bo riding that furniture car," I said lamely.

"Why, that car had dynamite signs all over it," Bennett sputtered. "If a bo had no more sense than to ride it he deserves—"

"Of course," Dippy interrupted as he leaned his two hundred and forty pounds against the end sill that was sticking out of the pile. "But if he's under this pile of

scrap and alive, we want to be getting to him in a hurry."

"Go careful," Bennett cautioned. "I'm telling you that was a car of explosives!"

"It 'll blow a fellow just as far if he's careful, won't it?" replied Dippy as he heaved again at the end sill. "If you're so afraid of being tossed off the right-of-way, better beat it back and see that the rear end's protected. In the mean time Kendall and I will see if this passenger committed suicide."

CHAPTER V.

A TRAIN OF EVIDENCE.

WHILE Bennett hurried back to the caboose to be sure that the red ribbon was out to protect the rear end, Moore and I did our best to best under the pile of wreckage to see if we could discover a body.

Moore did most of the work, I guess, because I felt sick and weak in the knees. I knew, sooner or later, we would find Miss Clark's body. There was just as much chance that she would be alive when we found her as there is of my being called to-morrow morning at nine o'clock to accept the presidency of the Pennsylvania Railroad System.

By the time Bennett got back from the rear end Moore had worked himself out and I had become so weak that I couldn't have moved a turkey feather without the aid of a pinch bar.

Not only that, my mental netting seemed to stop up. When it came to offering a suggestion as to what should be done next, I was as useful as a water barrel with both ends knocked out

Bennett and Moore had agreed that the next move should be to take as much of the head end of the train as was hanging together and pull it over to Stillwell, and report the accident.

"As he started for the head end Moore made a discovery.

"Who said one of those cars was loaded with explosives?"

"It was marked explosives," I volunteered.

"The way-bill calls for explosives," Bennett said.

"Well," said Moore, "miracles do happen on railroads, so I'm willing to believe that a car of explosives might get mussed up like that without letting loose, but I haven't discovered anything in this pile of junk that looks like dynamite or shells or anything else but sawdust."

That remark aroused me enough so that I put in the hour, while Bennett and Moore were gone with the head end, making a careful inspection of the wreckage.

I found two or three big crates which had been bursted. One was filled with something resembling cork crumbs and the other two with sawdust. One place on the ground was a pile of iron shavings such as you find around the bed of a power plane in the back shops.

From evidence I could gather it looked as if there had been a mistake in the billing, but I couldn't get very far along the line of this speculation because I felt sure that the wrecking gang, when it got busy, was going to discover the remains of a tragedy.

The time between pay-days never seemed longer than the hour I hung about that pile of wreckage waiting for Bennett and Moore to get back from Stillwell. There's nothing that makes a fellow feel more like the inside of an old-fashioned link than to have to stand by a mess of wood and iron under which he feels certain is a crushed body, and be powerless to do anything more than hate himself for being helpless.

Bennett and Moore pulled up from Stillwell with the steam wrecker just a few minutes before there drifted over from west of the rear end the two short that told us some one had run onto the red flag. A few minutes later the rusty old tea kettle used as a watch-dog at the Cannelton mines came sputtering up the west-bound main-line with the old wooden derrick ahead of several coal cars, the latter being decorated with the bridge and building department's extra gang that had been working on the Cannelton tipples.

There isn't anything very exciting in picking up what remains after a string goes into the ditch. Most of it's hard work and cuss words.

It's hard on the nerves, too, when every time the iron arm of the steam-derrick pulls out a pair of trucks or half a box car you expect to find a mangled body. If you don't find it, you know the very thing the derrick lifts may have been protecting a spark of life which is promptly smothered when the wreckage settles down in the spot from where the derrick has taken its armful.

Since Rainbow Stebbins, who came out with the gang from Cannelton, had to warn me to stand back several times, I guess about all I did was to get in the road. I've heard Bennett and Moore bragging about the quick work they did in cleaning up that mess, but before they got enough of the junk away to show me that there was no mangled body in the mix-up, it seemed to me we had been at the job long enough to have earned a pension or a place in the Old Soldiers' Home.

There was nobody beneath the wreckage. On that point the evidence was convincing, and while I felt as if some one had lifted a tandem compound off my shoulders, I began to speculate on what had become of Miss Clark.

There was no chance of my being wrong about her having climbed into that car. When did she get out of that car? I was so busy trying to get the answer to that question that the foreman of the wrecking gang and the foreman of the bridge and building gang had to get into a pretty hot argument before I took an interest.

"I'm here to say that's a fresh cut around that wheel," the wrecking gang foreman was saying.

"Naw!" the bridge man said in derision. "Just a plain case of a broken flange."

"You jest climb over in that car and take a look," said the wrecking gang foreman. "You can't tell me nothing about broken flanges. Ain't I been picking up this junk for ten years?"

Of course, the member of the bridge and building gang wouldn't act on the advice of the wrecking gang foreman, but I did. I climbed into the coal-car into which they had swung one of the trucks from under the furniture-car, and found that a segment, almost a quarter of the circumference of the wheel, was broken out of the flange.

It was as smooth and clean a break as one could imagine. It was too smooth to be a break. It looked as if, on the inside of the wheel, no more than half an inch below the tread, a groove had been cut. The metal was bright and smooth. How it could have been cut I had no idea, but that it had been cut was quite apparent.

If I had doubled a hill division with a coal drag, I wouldn't have been so near all in as when, twenty-one hours after Dippy Moore pulled out of Thornville with me decorating the top of a furniture-car, we pulled over the high switch at Morrowton.

When we left Thornville I may have had an indefinite idea as to where I was going and what I was going to do there. When I arrived in Morrowton the nearest I could come to anything resembling a real thought was a headache.

The first day I was on a railroad corporation's pay-roll was a day of some confusion for me. Three days before, I had bolted a steady run on a double-shovel cultivator, headed a couple of hay-burners into the pasture, and completely ruined a good farm-hand in order to make a machinist's helper that wouldn't help.

The first job I didn't help on was doctoring some piston rings; and when I walked up to the engine, patted it on the cylinder, and said in a gentle coaxing voice, "Sook, bossy—sook, bossy," the machinist I was supposed to be helping knew right away that about all I knew about machinery was how to run a milk-pail and a hand-power churn.

The first bit of helping he asked me to do was to run a wheelbarrow down to the engine-room back of the shops and get a load of live steam. The engineer wouldn't give it to me without a requisition from the agent, four blocks away, and the agent couldn't give me the requisition because the yardmaster had his steam pencil.

Having been assured that we couldn't get to work on those piston rings until we had some live steam for the steam-chest, I volunteered to go down to the switch-shanty, just a half-mile away, and get the

agent's steam pencil from the yardmaster, so I could have that very necessary requisition on the engineer

After chasing the goat up and down the yard for an hour, I caught up with the yardmaster and got the steam pencil. It weighed about a ton by the time I got back to the agent's office, and then imagine my chagrin when the agent discovered that the yardmaster had sent the pencil without the lead, and of course a pencil without lead is no good for writing.

I beat it down the yards again, and chased the switch-engine some two miles, and got the lead for the steam pencil, the yardmaster apologizing for having overlooked it in the first place. He got the lead out of a box up on top of the tank, and, while I had my own opinion about a yardmaster who would overlook such an essential matter as the lead for the steam pencil, I picked up the iron pin he tossed down to me and made haste back to the agent's office for my requisition for a wheelbarrow-load of live steam

They didn't permit me to see them write the requisition with the steam pencil; but they gave me something that looked like a gunny sack with half a dozen lead sinkers on it, and I made my way back to the engine-room.

The engineer accepted the requisition, and explained to me that I'd better fill the bottom of the wheelbarrow with water and cinders, because that was about the only thing that would keep the live steam from soaking through.

Having followed instructions very carefully until I had a sloppy mess of cinders and water in the barrow, he pointed to a hose on the wall, and told me to be sure and cover the nozzle of the hose in the cinders and water and then to turn on the juice.

Of course I had to stand in front of the barrow to hold the hose under the water and cinders with one hand and reach up and turn on the juice with the other.

The air compressor must have been double-heading that day, because it blew a half-bushel of water and cinders over me before I could bat an eye, and by the time I got back to my machinist and he had helped me get a few gobs of mud out of my eyes, I began to suspect I'd been made a fool of, though the machinist said he didn't see how that could be "since man ain't found no way to improve on nature in that particular field."

Of course, I know now that that steam lead pencil I carried from the lower end of the yard to the agent's office was nothing but a Gould knuckle and pin; but when I finished up that first day's labor there wasn't anything for certain in this world, and I began to suspect that everybody was living just to add misery and uncertainty to my young and freckled life.

I felt that same way, only more so, when I hit the hay in Morrowton that night after we had picked up the mess east of Cannelton. It seemed as if fate was just kicking me round for the fun of it, and in the end I'd have to wake up and find I was the real joke, because I was taking all of it seriously.

Knowing a fellow's off in his think-dome is one thing; knowing how to get right is another. I put in what remained of the night after I hit the hay trying to show myself what was wrong with me; but by the time the sun had registered in I hadn't convinced myself that there was anything wrong with me.

Myself insisted that I was right side up, but the rest of the world had turned over. It struck me as reasonable that if I'd go and get about a dollar's worth of real breakfast the world would look better, including myself. That's just where I was wrong

I had that dollar's worth neatly tucked away and was paying for it with an iron wheel of Smoke Johnson's friendship touch, when a man and woman entered the dining-room.

Just as I glanced their way I reached for a cigar from the can on the case. As I continued to glance at the man and woman I picked up the can and tried to put it in my mouth, thereby spilling a dozen nickel cigars over the floor.

The spectacle seemed to amuse Miss Clark. She looked at me and laughed. All I could do was to look at her and try to keep my lower jaw from sagging down

so far it would get tangled in my watch-chain.

"How are you, Mr. Kendall?" Miss Clark asked as she came toward me.

Just to let her know there was no hard feelings, I tried to present her with the empty cigar-can, holding it out in a sort of a *damfule* way that comes natural to me. After I had swallowed my Adam's apple and coughed it up again, I managed to say something or other that didn't make sense but broke the tension, thereby giving me a chance to throw my lamps on her gentleman friend.

It was—perhaps I should say, he was—my personal-injury agent.

I didn't walk back to Thornville. I must have ridden back with Dippy Moore, because I showed up at Steiger's that night with a half crate of eggs, which Steiger said had been sent over from Morrowton for Rainbow Stebbins.

Steiger was much disappointed because Dippy had failed to get a basket of eggs that was to have been sent over for him—meaning Steiger. Perhaps the next hog-head coming over would bring them, and in the mean time Rainbow wouldn't mind if Steiger borrowed a dozen.

While I was doing my best to switch out the events of the last forty-eight hours so that I could shove them by Steiger in a coherent train, the Dutchman opened the wooden crate, and then we had something else to add to whatever it was we already had more than a plenty of.

It was a neat little egg-crate. It had little holes for the eggs, just like other crates; but instead of there being sheets of strawboard between the layers of eggs, each filler was a box so that one might lift it from the case without the eggs falling through.

Steiger lifted the top crate, and discovered that the next crate had but six eggs in it, when it would have held eighteen. This discovery led the Dutchman to lift the second crate.

In the third one were but three eggs. There were six eggs in the fourth crate, three of them being in the upper left-hand spaces and three in the lower right-hand spaces.

The fifth crate had a diagonal row of eggs from the lower right-hand corner to the upper left-hand corner; and the sixth and bottom crate was full.

After asserting that Hades had no mystery to compare with this sort of an arrangement of eggs, Steiger arranged the trays on the table, and, waving both hands at them, asked:

"For vy ees it?"

"For why is anything?" I replied "Nothing makes sense for me any more. Who sent them over?"

"Who?" Steiger repeated. "Who but Potsheimer sends us eggs? You ought to know already, you haf carried them so many times for five years. Stebbins says to me vy not Potsheimer send for me to you some eggs, and vat ees it for me to say but 'chure'?"

Steiger and I brooded over those eggs until I was afraid they would be hatching out on us. We put in all night trying to make something out of that sort of an arrangement of eggs.

We numbered the spaces, we lettered them, we cussed them! I don't pretend to be a lightning calculator at figures, and when it comes to solving riddles it's all I can do to keep up with the time-keeper and see that he doesn't overpay me

About all that Steiger knows in figuring is that there are twenty-one meals on a five-dollar meal-ticket when, on the basis of twenty-five cents per meal, there should be but twenty.

By working all night with figures and letters, by combining our higher education and our lower education, when we gave up the job at four in the morning we were certain of this.

There were some eggs in that crate. Some of the fillers were full; some of the fillers weren't full.

The problem then was very simple. Why were some of the fillers made up of loads and empties?

I suppose a fellow with brains could work it out by algebra by going back and letting X equal the hen; but there wasn't any way you could count it on your fingers and be sure of the answer.

Steiger—his education being home-

grown, you can't blame him—insisted that the answer was to ask Rainbow what it meant. I insisted that if it meant anything other than that some of the fillers didn't carry as many eggs as the others, Rainbow would be the last person in the world to tell us.

Steiger seemed to have an idea that in that event he could get the answer by threatening to divide Rainbow with a meat-cleaver. I told him that was contrary to all the laws of long and short division, and if we tried to do it that way the police-court judge would probably subtract about fifty dollars from each of us and add thirty days in jail.

There being nothing much else we could do, we decided to turn over to Rainbow the crate when he called for it, and see if there was any other way to find out what answer he would work out.

To do this I had to turn second-story worker, and right there was where I headed in on a cut of trouble that was the real thing, for when a town looks for you and don't find you it has a right to conclude that you are not there, and when the night watchman isn't looking for you and you drop down on his dome he has a right to conclude that there you are; and after he has registered you in at the city bastile and you are looking out on life from behind the steel shutters you can't help but conclude that his conclusion was right.

CHAPTER VI.

HATCHING THE EGGS

THAT L. C. L. of eggs hatched out a string of trouble for one Dave Kendall, the same being me. The string was so long that, even now, I wonder if really I've seen the tail-lights.

After Steiger and I failed to make headway in our egg juggling, I beat it to my room and the hay, leaving instructions with the Dutchman to call me the minute Rainbow showed up for his shipment of hen fruit.

When I went to bed I thought I was dead-tired, but I got in all of an hour's yard-time trying to figure out how Miss Clark had escaped from that furniture-car without my seeing her, and how, having escaped, she showed up so promptly in Morrowton with that personal-injury person.

The last I remember, until Steiger woke me, was a semiconscious, semi-idiotic desire to assist this personal-injury person to collect some of his own accident insurance.

"Dafe! Dafe! Stebbins is went already!"

It was Steiger, of course, and the way he was shaking me suggested Prussian ruthlessness. A silent wish that Stebbins, Steiger, and the eggs were frying on a boiler-head at the end of a coal drag on the Fire and Brimstone road didn't prevent me from jumping out of bed and slipping into my clothes in such haste as would have suggested to most any one that I had had a short call to meet the pay-car.

"How long since?" I asked. "And which way did he go?"

"He ees went in the dining-room by breakfast," Steiger explained. "Unt I haf mine cook hurrying up slow until you get up."

"All right," I said to Steiger. "You can give the cook the highball, because I'll be drifting into that dining-room before you get to the kitchen. Has he the eggs?"

"Already by him," Steiger replied as he started down-stairs ahead of me.

Steiger's dining-room was one of these half stand-up and half sit-down affairs—a lunch-counter on one side and three tables on the other, the whole giving one the impression of a reformed skating-rink looking longingly back on past glories.

Every once in a while the cook would be sober enough to work, and the rest of the time we were supposed to be out on the road or saving our money for Thrift Stamps.

The cook was sober this morning, and Steiger was coming in from the kitchen with a string of flats and a cup of Java, when I shoved in from the side entrance and pulled alongside Rainbow at the lunch-counter

"Well, I see you got the eggs all right," I said.

"Yes, thanks," he replied.

"What do they stand you now?"

"Fifty-two cents. The profiteering in this country is fierce."

Rainbow was rather talkative. He complained about the high cost of living and the food rules and the price of coal, and said he didn't see how poor families, especially where the head of the house was dead, could get by.

I suggested that it must be terrible in Germany, and he came right back with the opinion that it was probably better because the German government had a way of looking after such things. I didn't argue that point with him, because the argument I felt like using on him would have put him in the back shop for a month, and before anything like that happened I wanted to know why it was that some of those egg-fillers had more eggs than the others.

When Rainbow picked up the egg-crate —it had a bail on it like a bucket, so one could carry it easily—I eased off my roost and told him I was going his way, as I had to go over to the despatcher's office and see that the official timepiece was behaving itself.

As we walked across the tracks above the ice-house I asked him what conclusion, if any, he had come to regarding the wreck beyond Cannelton.

"Guess you know as much about it as I do," he replied. "You were there, and you saw the truck and the wheel that went bad."

"Looks to me as if that wheel had been cut with some sort of a machine-tool," I volunteered.

"We may know more about it by to-night," he replied. "Trainmaster's going to hold kangaroo court to-day."

"And of course they'll have to bestow a cluster of hardware on some one for the good of the service," I suggested.

Rainbow didn't come back on that one, but turned abruptly toward the east entrance to the station building, while I lingered at the west entrance.

Speaking of the box-car style of architecture, the Thornville station building was it. It had two ends and two sides, a foundation, and a roof.

It was a double-decker, with the trainmaster's court-room, the O. S. and D., fuel clerks, and the time-keeper spread out in the west end of the upper deck. The bridge and building department kept in out of the weather in the east end of the upper deck.

On the lower deck, and well awash, as a sailor would say, in the east end was the waiting-room and the ticket-office. The agent's private office—most of the time occupied by a half-dozen seal-snatchers and bill clerks, to say nothing of the yard-master and the rest of the furniture—shared the center of the building with the baggage-room. The west end of the lower deck furnished a home for a cluster of train-despatchers who otherwise would have been on the town.

The drafting and blue-printing department of the bridge and building layout was in the southeast corner on the upper deck. A part of the south wall had been replaced with glass so that the blue-print artists could get the advantage of the sun.

This big window started in about two feet above the floor and slanted back toward the ridge of the roof like the windows in a photograph-shop. Being set in at the base about two feet, it left a ledge of that width extending for eight feet. Looking at it, especially in the dark, no one would suspect that the ledge was the front step to the county jail.

But it is—or it was.

I knew that glass top was on that office, and I knew, too, that Rainbow Stebbins occupied the sun-parlor most of the time. The minute his back was turned I beat it for the west entrance and eased myself up the stairs to the second deck.

I hid out behind the toy fire-engine at my end of the hall until Rainbow landed at the top of the stairs in the east end of the building and escorted that crate of eggs into his office. As soon as he was out of the long hall I drifted east in it until I was opposite the little room used for storing supplies.

Taking a last look up and down the hall, I quickly opened the door at my right, marked "To Roof," stepped in, and closed it.

A steep flight of steps led up to the manhole. I only used four of them until I had

bumped my head on the heavy covering. I fumbled around in the dark until I found the bolt, and a second later I eased up on the lid until a couple of inches of daylight appeared.

The roof of the old ark left no doubt but that it had been planned and executed by a master car-builder. At the top center it had a flat running-board about four feet wide, and from this, on either side, the slanting roof fell away, the grade being about two in eight or ten. Three big chimneys, one at either end and one in the center, stood guard over the landscape.

If a fellow made himself flat along the running-board, there wasn't much danger of his being spotted except by some fool switchman who might be riding by on top of a cut of cars. As the tracks were north of the building, I thought I would be tolerably safe if I kept on the south side of the big chimneys or on the south slant of the roof just off the running-board.

I was going to see what Rainbow did with those eggs even if the whole town caught me prowling over that roof, so I wiggled through the manhole and slipped along on my digestion until I was in the clear on the south side of the chimney which came up through Rainbow's office.

It was about eight twenty by the time I had wiggled over to the chimney. Two hours later I began to realize that I was in for a warm time.

Big Dave Kendall, the same being me, is here to proclaim that there are hotter places than an engine cab. The southern exposure of a slanting roof, with the sun beating down on it, for example.

By ten o'clock I could feel myself melting away, and I began to wonder what sort of a ghost-story they'd cook up when they found my clothes on the roof, some day, with nothing in them.

To make matters worse, I found they had a heavy curtain on the inside of that glass. They kept it pulled down about halfway, and if I slipped down the roof to where I could peek in I was so low down that Rainbow or his assistant, Carter, was sure to see me.

There was not more than half an inch between the curtain-roller and the top of the glass, and in order to get a squint through that narrow slit I had to do the high-trapeze act, half my body on the running-board and the other hanging down on the roof

I had to keep pretty much on the job, and while I was on the job it was always a toss-up as to whether I would be able to stick or would shoot the chute through the glass or over the roof, landing on my head perhaps, and mussing up the cement platform some twenty feet or more below.

It took me a half-hour of squinting through that slit to locate the egg-crate. It was standing at the side of the drinking-water keg.

That made it nice, too, because every time I looked at the egg-crate I had to look at the water-keg, and every time I looked at the water-keg I got thirsty.

By the time the shop whistle blew the noon grub-signal not a chicken had hatched from that setting of eggs, and there was I, sizzling in a sun that seemed to have the blower working, every bone in my body kinked by the heat, accompanied by a thirst that would have been a credit to a two-hump camel just in from doubling the Sahara Desert.

Just when I had concluded I had the imagination of a hop head and the brains of a bass drum and ought to be going about my regular business if I had any, I took what I intended to be my last peek through that narrow space between the curtain-roll and the window-sash

Rainbow's helper was slipping on his coat and hat. I heard him saying that he was going out to throw the switch on a bean sandwich.

The melodious murmur so moved me that I came within an ace of letting go my toe-hold on the running-board and diving head first through the glass.

I stuck, however, and kept my eyes glued on the space between the curtain-roller and the sash. The young fellow went out, and Rainbow walked over and locked the door behind him, and just to show, I suppose, that he had no mercy whatever, turned to the water-barrel and drank what seemed to me to be a hundred dollars' worth of cool water.

He then picked up the egg-crate and placed it on the long table used for making tracings. He opened the crate and carefully lifted out the top tier of eggs.

He looked at the eggs for a minute, then picked up one and seemed to be shaking it close to his ear. This seemed to satisfy him that he had made a good guess, and he took the egg in his hands much like one would take an apple which he wanted to break in two parts.

He gave the egg a twist and a couple of turns, and the top half came off. This he placed carefully on the table and poured from the lower half into his hand, not an incipient spring chicken, but what at first looked like several iron nails of the old square type.

That egg either was laid by a hen that had been brought up on shingle nails or else it wasn't an egg at all.

Rainbow walked across the room, disappearing from my view beneath the curtain. He went so close to the glass at the bottom of the slanting window that his hands were visible to me, except when he bent his head forward.

I got one pretty fair squint at his handful of hardware, and the best guess I could make was that there had been four small machine-tools in that egg

Out of that crate Rainbow took four eggs, each of which hatched out three or four pieces of steel. He worked pretty fast and carefully put each egg back in its place when he had satisfied himself as to its character.

As soon as he had inspected the fourth one he looked no further. He hurriedly replaced the eggs, put the crate back near the water-barrel, unlocked the door, and got busy with a T-square at the tracing-table.

Nothing happened during the afternoon except the sun. Rainbow's helper came back just after the whistle sounded one o'clock, and Rainbow went out.

I had quite a debate with myself whether I should follow Rainbow or remain with the eggs. I finally decided that if I was going to hatch out of the eggs something worth while, I'd have to stay with the job of setting on them.

By three o'clock the sun had every bone in my body warped so that I felt as if I wouldn't be able to hold water if I ever got a chance to drink it. Rainbow had not returned to the office, and I began to wonder if the way to get action was to get in out of the weather and run a bluff on Rainbow's helper.

I thought I might go in and say Rainbow had sent me for the eggs. If that didn't get results I could pick up the crate and walk out with it because the helper wasn't more than a dime's worth of anatomy at the most

If one Dave Kendall, the same being me, wanted to couple on to that office and pull hence with it, Rainbow's helper would have had as much chance stopping him—meaning me—as a shack without a brake club would have holding twenty cars of coal on a ten-per-cent grade once they got rolling. I'm not boasting in this, because everybody knows that I'm a good man, and those who won't admit it are jealous.

As I was saying before I remarked that everybody worth while knows that when I start I go if the drawbars hold together, the sun suggested to me that if I didn't want to be burned to a cinder I'd better walk in and make way with that crate of eggs while Rainbow was absent.

Every time I peeked down and saw that water-barrel in the room below, I thought better of this plan, and I finally crawled back on the running-board and wiggled over to the manhole in the roof.

That was an automatic bolt on the inside of the covering, and I had permitted the lid to drop after I had climbed out on the roof. I suppose Dippy Moore would say that to lock myself out was quite in keeping with my intellectual capacity; but Dippy's an awful crab, and wouldn't see that concentration is a most desirable mental quality.

My mind was concentrated on getting to that window, and to expect me to be thinking at the same time of getting away from the window would be like expecting two trains to pass on a single track. It isn't the fault of the track; it just can't be did, that's all!

Well, what was left of me wiggled back

across the roof to the east chimney and tried to see how many different kinds of cuss words it had picked up in its brilliant career. By the time it had checked up the list the whistle was blowing for quitting-time, and there was I, out on the roof, where I couldn't quit if I wanted to.

Rainbow's helper seemed to think it was in violation of the Standard Book of Rules and the Constitution of the United States to be at work after the whistle blew. The minute it began to blow he grabbed his hat and coat, and by the time it sawed off he was at the office door, and by the time he was on the other side of the door I was slipping down the roof, determined to end the agony by climbing down onto the shelf at the base of the window, and, if I couldn't raise the window, get into the room by breaking out a pane of glass.

I thought I could work fast enough to get in the clear before Rainbow showed up, if he showed at all.

I didn't dare get out to the lower edge of the roof, because if there was any one on the platform at the rear of the building they would see me.

The side sash of the building was wide enough that, with some care, I could keep my feet on it, and by holding much of my weight on the edge of the roof proper there was little danger of breaking in the skylight.

I made the ledge all right, but if the insurance company had seen me while covering the last step or two it would have canceled my policy right there. I'm a daring rascal, but I don't let any one know it, because it's so hard to get insurance.

A two-foot shelf, eight feet long, with a twenty-foot drop to a cement walk on one side and a skylight on the other is my idea of no easy place to spend a couple of hours, especially so when one of them is the supper hour. Rainbow had just that sort of disposition which inspired him to come into the room as I was getting ready to stick my foot through a pane of glass.

The first thing he did was to pull the curtain down to the bottom of the window. In order to do this he had to—there wasn't any way he could escape—see me.

I hugged the wall at the west end of the ledge. I tried my best to make myself look like a piece of house. For the time being I thought that ought to be easy, because there was so much wood in my head.

Rainbow must have had his eyes shut. That was the only way he could have pulled down that curtain without seeing me.

The curtain came down within an inch or two of the bottom sash. Either Rainbow didn't see me or he did. I'd bet a blind gasket either way and consider myself lucky if I won.

I kept hugging the wall out there until dusk sort of obliterated me from the landscape and then I got down on my hands and knees and peeked under the curtain.

It was just as well I hadn't been called to take out my bulgine that day, because I'd have dropped a crown sheet or gone through White River bridge. It just wasn't my day, and that was all there was to it!

When I got my squint under that curtain the first person I saw in the room was Miss Clark and half of me started for the cement sidewalk below. The other half of me hung on the shelf and I might have come through without a scratch if, in trying to help the other half of me back, I hadn't jammed my foot through the window glass, making as much noise as two hogs that jump at each other when they are going fifty miles an hour.

I heard a little scream in the room and Rainbow, in a scared soprano, asking:

"What's that?"

Of course I had the answer, but I thought it would do him more permanent good if I let him work it out for himself. He wasn't slow getting busy on it, either.

He started toward the window and, knowing that it wouldn't be just pleasant to be caught sleeping out on his little shelf, I swung off, hanging by my hands, realizing that my stock was going to take a sudden drop.

I heard the window creak as Rainbow started it up and I heard the rear door to the waiting-room open below me and there I was hanging out in the weather without tail lights or running orders, with nothing to do but decide whether I'd rather have a head-on or a tail-end collision.

My fingers decided the question for me.

I never could hold on to anything very long —not long enough, sometimes, to get from the pay car to the bank. One hand slipped off the shelf, and to keep myself from going into space all spread out I cut loose and took the drop.

The lighting wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. Of course, if it had been Dippy Moore or Tubby Whalen who stepped out the back door of the waiting-room just as I let go, it would have been like landing on a feather bed.

But it was old Tom Watson who, being the night detective, according to all the known habits of the species, should have been off in some quiet corner taking his shut-eye.

But no such luck for one Dave Kendall, the same being me. I had to add myself to the heavy responsibilities Tom was carrying around on his shoulders, and in doing so I sort of drove Tom's collar button so far into his neck that it fouled his Adam's apple, sending Tom one way and me another.

As I was working a full head of steam when we hit I got pretty much the worst of it. Tom was on his feet with a horse pistol born in 1861 in his hands before I was sure whether it was my leg or the cement pavement that had cracked.

I was lingering in the bosom of the dent I'd made in the walk when Tom, tolerably angry and sputtering like a drop of water in a hot box, advanced toward me, the pistol, with a muzzle on it as big as a diamond stack, pointed in my direction.

I'll write it on the work-book that the dignity of the law was pretty much ruffled. Its celluloid collar was riding the back of its head like a crown slipping into the scrap heap and one side of its face looked as if it had side-swiped a car-load of sand-paper.

Both of us were pumping hard to get enough wind in our train-lines to enable us to express the poetic feelings that were swishing around in us. Tom didn't have to do as much pumping as I did so he got the jump on the conversation.

"Come over here in the light," he ordered.

"Sure," I said, pleasantly. "Any place you say, but just turn the business end of that piece of sewer pipe away from me."

"I've a mind to lay it over your dome just for luck," was Tom's unkind reply, and then, as I came within the light shining through the waiting-room door and he saw who I was, he continued:

"Where you been? They've been looking for you all day. You're sure carrying on mighty queer and—"

Then he was interrupted by Rainbow's voice from the window up above.

"Just hold that fellow down there until I can come down."

"What's he been doing?" Tom asked

"He was trying to break into this office when I came in and caught him," Rainbow replied.

"If you caught him why didn't you keep him?" muttered Tom, as he rubbed the side of his face from which the varnish had been scratched.

"Tom," I began, feeling that it was up to me to do some real talking before Rainbow showed up. "You know me. I'm—"

"I hope I do!" Tom interrupted. "What I've seen of you and heard about you I wouldn't trust you no further than I can throw a Baldwin hog."

"What do you mean 'hear about' me?" I asked, feeling that Tom and I were going to have an interesting argument.

"Never mind," he replied, "there's a lot of folks wanting to talk to you about that wreck and —"

Just then Rainbow came round the corner of the building and two or three passengers rambled over to the waiting-room door.

"Arrest this man," Rainbow ordered. "He was trying to break in my office and I'm going to prosecute him."

I put on the blower and in about a second had up enough steam that I felt I could turn one of my driving rods into Tom's face and knock him over in the next county. As for Rainbow, I knew I could blow at him and put him through the near-by wall.

My mind was made up. I just hesitated a second to feel sorry for both of them because they didn't even suspect what was going to happen to them and then—

Well, bad luck, all dressed up in a woman's clothes, came tripping through the waiting-room. A fellow might just as well sign the orders and pull out when a female

bad luck catches up with him. It occurred to me that maybe the way to duck this was to lock myself in jail with it on the outside

"You couldn't be more frequent if you were twins," I said to her. "Come on, Tom; I guess I'll be safer in the booby-hatch than any place else."

"But I ain't got no warrant!" Tom protested, showing a delicacy altogether surprising for a plain-clothes bull

"But you caught him in the act," Rainbow insisted, "and here's another witness, Miss Clark!"

"Yep, Tom!" I cut in, wanting to get away before I mussed up the railroad's property with human limbs. "You can take me down for trampling the law under my feet and your face will convict me. Let's pull out for the dungeon."

Fifteen minutes later, for the first time in my young and care-free career, I was in the city bastile, not so much concerned with my ultimate fate as with how much real grub Tom would be able to buy with the dollar I had sent him out to spend.

CHAPTER VII.

ANYTHING TO PLEASE THE LADIES.

I SPENT that night in jail. Most of the time I was eating, and while I wasn't eating I was draining the water bucket. Of course it was all nonsense running me in that way, but I couldn't convince Tom Watson that it was.

Tom was out to make a reputation for himself. He hadn't made an arrest in ten years, and now that he had a chance to earn his salary he wouldn't listen to reason.

The jail wasn't any worse than some of the rooming-houses I've gone against in my time, and it wasn't the fact that I had to put up with it for a night that made me peevish. It was the way Tom kept saying that everybody had been looking for me during the day.

"When they find out I've got you over here in the jug," he said as he departed to resume his watch over the high and low ones in the upper yard, "I reckon they'll reopen that investigation."

"What do you mean?" I yelled at him.

"Well, they are looking for first-hand information on that wreck beyond Cannelton, and, if I get it straight, you were there with both feet."

With that he was gone, and I couldn't have hit him with an iron slat even if I had been able to tear one out of the cage.

The only experience I ever had with the law was when a landlady got me mixed up with another fellow and put a brick on my check. The bill she was trying to collect was only eleven dollars, and it cost me twenty-three eighty to prove that I wasn't the fellow she was looking for, even though the minute she saw my open, honest face, she admitted it.

Being not guilty, in that instance, and getting stung twenty-three eighty, made me wonder if in my present predicament it might be better to admit I was guilty and keep away from a lawyer. It was too important a question for me to decide, so when Tom came in, in the early morning, to see that there hadn't been a jail delivery, I persuaded him to get word to Shorty Davis, who sued a railroad company once and got a verdict, the lawyers in the case getting everything else.

Just the minute Shorty showed up I wished I hadn't sent for him. There are times when Shorty's sense of propriety and amenity suggests that he got his early training in a livery stable.

"They're building a scaffold outside," Shorty sung out as he came in. "I've wired the governor, asking him to change the sentence to stabbing to death with custard pie. I told you—"

"You can pull the pin on the comedy," I cut in. "What I want from you is some help in getting out of this rat-hive."

"Talking about getting out and you haven't been sentenced yet!" said Shorty. "I don't know what you're in for, but it will be twenty years for you at the least. Hair cut short and a zebra suit and—"

"That's what I call humor," I horned in. "That's funny like a head-on collision. They can't put a man in jail for doing nothing."

"Of course they can't," Shorty agreed. "The very fact they've jugged you proves

that you've done something. Which eating-house did you rob?"

"Say, Shorty!" I exclaimed with some heat. "Why is it that every time you get a chance you have to show just why you're a conductor? If you'd keep your mouth shut sometimes somebody might fail to notice your lack of brains.

"Now you listen to me. I've got to have a good lawyer."

Shorty whistled.

"You'll be lucky if you get off with twenty years if you get a real good lawyer. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing, I told you."

"Of course," Shorty replied. "That's what they all say. Besides nothing, what have you been doing?"

"There are just two things you can do for me," I said, foaming a little. "One of them is to get Steiger over here right away, and the other is to be sure you don't come back."

With that Shorty cut out the medicine-show comedy and begun to act human. I convinced him I needed a lawyer, and while I tried to convince myself just why I needed one, Shorty went out to get a friend of his who, if I understood correctly, as a lawyer was a good whist player.

When a fellow is innocent and can't prove it, the law travels sixty miles an hour. By four o'clock that afternoon, not only had I hired a lawyer by the name of Tinker, but Rainbow had sworn to a complaint charging me with breaking and entering.

I was rushed before a justice of the peace and given a preliminary hearing, and enough evidence was produced by Rainbow, Tom Watson, and Miss Clark to convince the J. P. that I was a regular second-story worker, and what did he do but bind me over to the criminal court on a thousand-dollar bond.

It wasn't to be stage money, either. The bond was to be cash, or one Dave Kendall, the same being me, was to take up his sojourn in the county jail until the court found it convenient to try me.

The judge paid me a fine compliment when he fixed that bond at a thousand in cash. I never suspected I looked like ready money.

If I'd wake up some morning and find myself with a thousand dollars, I'd know that I had lost both feet in an accident. My policy pays $500 for each foot.

I had been back in the jail an hour before I came to the conclusion that if I was on speaking terms with any one owning a thousand dollars in real money, the person must be Steiger. I sent for Steiger.

He was slow in getting over—most of them are when you want to borrow a thousand—because the cook had been imbibing something stronger than grape juice, and Steiger had to take care of the trade—and the cook, too.

The turnkey that's what they call the yardmaster in a jail—permitted Steiger to come over on my side the iron fence, and we went to the farther end of the corridor, and there I broke the news to him.

I told Steiger about the vigil on the roof, the eggs that hatched out pieces of steel, and the way I dropped into the lap of justice, so to speak.

He told me that Dippy Moore told him my name had been mentioned by every witness who attended the investigation of the Cannelton wreck. He said Rainbow's evidence was that I seemed much excited in the cause of the accident.

Steiger said that Dippy said the trainmaster had sent out a couple of call-boys and two clerks to look for me, and when no one could locate me, everybody looked wise. Within an hour after the kangaroo court had closed, there was a report out I had skipped town because I knew something about the Cannelton wreck.

Just to show Steiger I appreciated his telling me so much about myself, I suggested it would be nice for him to dig up a thousand dollars and put it up as my bond, thereby permitting me to get out in the fresh air again.

"Well, Dafe," Steiger said as he looked about the cell room, "this don't been such a bad place already. You get your board und room und noddings to vorry about."

"But you don't think I can get to the bottom of this case—and remember, Steiger, you're in it as far as I am—when I'm locked up in this circus wagon?"

Steiger thought over that a minute.

"Well, Dafe, I'll told you vat it ees," he finally said. "I've got by me twelf hundred dollars, but der Liberty Loan bond starts to-morrow again, unt don't der government need dose money?"

"You mean to tell me you'd buy bonds and let me stick around here on the spot for two or three months?"

"Vy not, Dafe? Der government needs it, and vat do you need—mit eats und a bet und nothing to vorry about?"

Steiger and I had something resembling an argument, but I didn't stand a chance to win. Yes, he had a thousand dollars, but the government had to have that the next day, when another Liberty Loan drive opened.

Yes, he might be able to borrow money, but if he borrowed money the government could use that just the same as if he hadn't borrowed it. I stood as much chance getting action on cash through Steiger as a strange boomer would have in standing off a Chinese restaurant for a fried-chicken dinner

I did get this far: Steiger said that if the judge would change the bond he'd be glad to sign it. That made me sure of another night's lodging in the bastile and, I suppose, another chunk of coin for the attorney who was such a good whist player.

When I hit the hay that night I tried to take some consolation from the fact that for once in my life I could go to sleep and know that the call boy wouldn't be kicking in the door just when I got the sleep special to rolling good.

To show I had reached that place where I was wrong when I was right, about midnight the turnkey came in and woke me, saying that there was a woman in the corridor who insisted on seeing me.

I dressed, wondering what variety of trouble was waiting for me. The turnkey let me out of my dog-house into the corridor and headed me into the box-stall at the end of the big cage.

He didn't follow me in, but closed the door behind me, and I found myself, defenseless, in the presence of a woman wearing a heavy veil.

I knew before she raised the veil that she was Miss Clark, and I made a firm resolution that I was going to ask her as many questions as she asked me, whatever her business proved to be.

"Mr. Kendall," she began as she took off the piece of deck apron behind which her face was hiding, "I wouldn't be here if I wasn't in a desperate situation."

"When it comes to desperate situations, we seem to be double heading on the same division," I volunteered.

"And yet you haven't the least idea of the seriousness of the situation," she said. "Mr. Kendall, you have been walking on the edge of a volcano."

"I'd hate to be in the middle of one," I replied, "if a fellow can find as much trouble on the edge as I have found in the last few days."

"If I can assure you that in the end you will come out all right, how much money will it take to persuade you to plead guilty to having wrecked that freight-train beyond Cannelton the other day?"

Just for a minute I wondered which one of us was crazy. I decided the hook wasn't working, and I had missed a mail bag!

"I didn't quite get the switch over on that one," I said to her. "Just back them up until they are off of the frog."

"If you knew everything would come out right in the end, what compensation would you ask for pleading guilty to having wrecked that freight-train beyond Cannelton?"

She restated the question just as if she meant it and expected an answer.

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, unable to keep back a laugh. "Sometimes I get a million dollars for a job like that, and then other times I get about forty brownies. What am I offered?"

"A thousand dollars a month for every month you spend in jail."

She snapped off the reply without a second's hesitation.

"Can you guarantee me steady, all-year employment?" I asked, stalling for time to get sand under my mental drivers in the hope that I might begin to see through the game.

"Please be serious, Mr. Kendall," she pleaded.

"Miss Clark," I replied, "I'm serious.

You're the one who is talking wild. I may not have a modern, double-track mind, but I'm not crazy.

"I wouldn't think of getting out on the main line on a division I knew nothing about, and running wild without time-card rights or orders."

At that she began to pace back and forth, and I leaned against the wall, the very thought of having a thousand dollars handed to me at one time making me weak in the knees. As she showed no disposition to resume the conversation, I unloaded a heavy thought:

"Besides, I'm not charged with train-wrecking."

"You will be charged with it to-morrow," she said quickly.

By reaching up and taking a firm hold on my hair I was able to hold myself in a semiupright position while I chewed that one over. She saw I was having a hard time to keep myself off the ties, and she came over and laid a hand on my arm.

"You will be, Mr. Kendall," she said earnestly, "and they'll make a strong case against you. They are going to change the charge. Stebbins will swear out the warrant."

"Why, that's nonsense!" I exclaimed. "I can prove an alibi easy enough, and, what is more, I think I could offer some interesting evidence as to who was in that furniture car when the trained pulled out of Thornville yards."

Her hand slipped from my arm. She turned away and walked to the farther side of the room.

"Have you a witness to corroborate your evidence? How will you build up an alibi?

"Think it over a minute. You know, of course, the person accused doesn't carry much weight on his own, unsubstantiated word."

"Why, Ben Walker knows—"

"Yes," she interrupted. "He gave his evidence at the trainmaster's investigation. He said he warned you away from that car and you refused to go."

"But Dippy Moore and Bennett surely—"

"They testified, too," she said quickly. "They were agreed that you were the first man at the wreck, and that you were there so quickly that you could not have been far away when it happened."

Just then I began to get a little dizzy. Was it possible that they might build up a case that would convict me on circumstantial evidence?

The whole thing was as silly as putting a bridle and driving reins on a passenger engine! All I could do was laugh, and, evidently, that was just what she didn't want me to do.

"Please do not laugh," she pleaded. "If only you realized, you wouldn't. If certain persons were determined to convict you of wrecking that train, and if they wouldn't hesitate at perjury, if they would find two or three persons who would swear that they saw you doing things which would compromise you, what could you do?

"If I can assure you everything will be all right in the end, that even any disgrace incident to your being sent to jail will be eliminated, what compensation would you want for pleading guilty?"

"Plead guilty to a charge of train-wrecking?"

"Yes," she replied.

"I wouldn't live to collect the first day's wages," I said. "If the gang around here didn't lynch me, I would."

"That could never happen," she insisted. "We can have a thousand soldiers from the camp north of Thornville to guard you, if it is necessary."

I believe it was the phrase "we can have a thousand soldiers" which set me to thinking.

"What's your interest in all this?" I asked

"Your own—partly," she replied.

"Thanks, and please take no offense if I say that sometimes I think I wouldn't be in this situation if it had not been for you. What's your other interest?"

"I can't tell you."

"What's Arthur's regular occupation when he works? You know he isn't a personal injury claim agent as well as I know it."

She did not answer.

"What business had you in that furniture-car?"

More noise like a long silence.

"How did you get over to Morrowton after the wreck?

"What were you doing in Rainbow Stebbins's office?"

She threw out her hands in a gesture of despair.

"Why ask those questions? I can't answer them. Don't you see you are in trouble, and I'm trying to show you the best way out? Can't you trust me?"

"Well, Miss Clark," I said slowly, "in some things I might trust you, but in this particular business I guess I'll have to work on a cash, pay-in-advance basis."

"Do you mean you'll accept the offer?"

"If I don't I'll go to jail, and if I do I'll go to jail and get paid for it."

She smiled a little at that, and admitted I showed a spark of intelligence in coming to that conclusion.

"You've given me all the train-orders, consists, and way-bills that you can give me — no further explanation you can make?"

"I'm afraid I've told you as much as I can tell," she replied.

"Well, I'll think it over until morning," I said.

"Please make your decision now," she pleaded.

"No, Miss Clark; before I press my seniority claim on an engine I walk round it a couple of times and look it over. I'll say this to you, though, other things being equal, I'll do anything to please the ladies."

CHAPTER VIII.

SENTENCED TO ELEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS.

FOR a rusty old four-wheeler, I did some tall mental traveling the remainder of the night. Taking it for granted that Miss Clark was giving me the straight dope on what was waiting for me around the first curve, first I decided that I'd let the hog drift with the grade and see where I would land; I'd plead guilty.

No sooner had I arrived at that terminal than I doubled back and decided I would not have my spotless reputation all mussed up with a charge of train-wrecking without fighting to the last ditch.

Between these two stations I got in a lot of light mileage before the turnkey brought in my breakfast, and I believe it was breakfast which decided me.

There was a plate of sliced oranges, a bowl of oatmeal and a pitcher of cream with a side order of buttered toast, two soft boiled, and an order of bacon done crisp, with a pot of coffee that had a breath like the kitchen "back home," and, to top off with, a stack of batter cakes with enough maple sirup to float a battle-ship.

I looked over the assortment and asked the turnkey if I couldn't have a few flowers on the table and please to put mint leaves in the finger bowl when he brought it.

Then I shoved in to switch the yard before the poor boob discovered he had brought me the chief of police's breakfast. It was all I could do to get the last flat in the clear and leave the lead open so my breath could get by.

"You have quite an appetite," the turnkey remarked when he came in to pull the empties. "Perhaps you would like to have something extra for dinner."

"What is this?" I asked him. "A kidding match?"

"No, indeed," he replied. "I'll be glad to take your dinner order. You're to have whatever you wish."

"What meal ticket is being shot full of holes?"

"Just so it isn't yours, why worry?" the turnkey replied.

I ordered for dinner everything I ever heard of on a switch list at a hotel and told the turnkey if he could think of anything I had omitted it would be all right if he added it. Then I started in to count the ties in the corridor until I could work off the tight feeling at my belt.

"Your room will be ready in a few minutes," the turnkey volunteered.

"My room?" I asked. "Oh, yes, my room, of course! Please see that it's an outside room, with bath."

"Surely. It is the best room in the building and—"

"Say," I interrupted, getting pretty sore when I saw how fresh he was, "if you don't want me to strain you through the picket fence that's between you and the office out there, you'd better cut that stuff and be taking up slack

"Just try to rub it in on this eagle-eye if you want to get scratched. Now, Oscar, or whatever your name is when you're off duty, get over the high switch while it's open!"

He pulled his freight without even whistling off. Either he had so many empty dishes or else he was in too big a hurry to close the gate after him, and I had to walk over and close it so there would be no chance of my escaping.

Scarcely had I prevented this daring break for liberty when he came shuffling back, opened the gate again, and said "Come on."

Well, ten minutes later I was reclining in luxury and cigar smoke in a room on the second floor, overlooking the main street, so deeply engrossed in the mystery of this life that I didn't even remember there was a life hereafter where a man must answer for his evil acts, including train wrecking.

At first I was sure they were just feeding me up and treating me nice so I would come clean with a confession. Then I began to do some real thinking.

I may have slipped a little and worked steam through the stack, I popped off a bit maybe, but I finally got some place even if I had to double some of the hills and jump over a few places where there were no rails.

Miss Clark was the answer. I wasn't to be treated as a common prisoner. If she could have that much influence with the jail authorities, just one of two things was true: Either she was a part of the law machinery and such a part as carried weight and authority, or there was graft in the Thornville police department.

By the time I had convinced myself—it would have been easy if I hadn't seen Miss Clark in Rainbow's office—that the woman was a government agent, dinner came and for the next hour or so I was fully occupied notwithstanding the fact that I let out my belt three notches.

About three o'clock I asked the turnkey to call up Steiger and tell him to come over. He did; that is to say, the turnkey did, but Steiger didn't.

Instead he sent me word that he was busy selling Liberty Bonds and the government needed the money, and as long as business kept up I couldn't possibly be in a hurry.

I was thinking some hard things about Steiger when my lawyer, who is a good whist player, was brought up to my room. He was as excited as a tallowpot who has just discovered that his insurance payment had been deducted twice from the same check. He could scarcely wait until we were alone in the room when he began:

"You are in for it—"

"Well," I interrupted, "as long as I can have this room and they keep me on the feed, I'll be in no hurry to give up this run. I couldn't treat myself any better if I had a passenger engine and was working steady."

"You don't understand—"

"True, true, indeed, your honor," I admitted. "But my lack of understanding doesn't affect my appetite. Here, have a rocking chair and a cigar."

He refused both and began on me again:

"You are up against a serious charge, Mr. Kendall. I've been trying to arrange the matter of your bond and, I'm sorry to tell you, you haven't heard the last of this, by any means. A new charge is to be brought against you to-morrow."

"What have I done now?"

"They are charging you with train-wrecking," he said slowly and with the proper emphasis to lay the foundation for a fat fee.

"As long as they charge it and don't ask me to pay cash, I'll take a chance."

He looked at me as if he thought I was crazy. He didn't know how near right he was at that.

"You could be sent over for twenty years," he explained.

"Twenty times twelve are two hundred and forty. Am I right?"

I don't know whether or not he answered, because I was multiplying those two hundred and forty months by one thousand dollars per month and was so astonished with the answer that I blurted out:

"Great shaker bars, that's a lot of money!"

"What are you going to plead?" he asked, and I thought I detected a vein of sarcasm in his words. "Insanity?"

"Nope," I replied, "I'm going to plead guilty."

"Guilty!" he exclaimed. "You mean you wrecked that train?"

"What's that got to do with pleading guilty?" I said. "Ain't a fellow got some constitutional rights?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Kendall, if I hurt your feelings, but I believe we should call in an alienist for "

"Listen, Tinker, if you bring one of those pro-Germans around here they'll be changing the charge to something worse than train-wrecking."

We had about a dime's worth of conversation after that and he pulled his freight, saying that he would be back later in the evening, and, after warning him against coming in for supper without letting me know in advance so I could have the chef prepare something worth while, I permitted him to go.

He returned in the evening, and with him came the medicine-mixer from the company hospital.

"'Lo, Doc!" I greeted him. "I hoped I had seen the last of you when I left the hospital. Remember now, I didn't send for you, so you can't charge up a call on me."

Doc laughed and said he had dropped in for a social hour, and I said I was sorry because I didn't have a deck and not enough money to make it interesting even if we could get one.

I let the company have the two rocking-chairs and I stretched out on the sofa, and for an hour we mixed medicine and law and railroading until you might have thought the first two were respectable enough to be associating with the last.

"By the way, Kendall," Doc said at last, "how are you feeling these days?"

"Well, I happen to be present," I replied, "and I can speak for myself."

"Ever bothered with pains in the head since you got out of the hospital?"

"Can't say that I am," I said. "About seven o'clock every morning, at noon, and six o'clock at night, I have pains in my stomach, but a little food always helps.

"Considering the fact that I haven't had my usual amount of exercise wrestling a Johnson bar, I'm feeling tolerably normal, thank you."

Then Doc tried to edge up to the subject of my late unpleasantness and I promptly closed the switch on him, and the two professional gentlemen "homeward wound their windy way," as the poet once said.

Doc and Tinker had been on their way only a few minutes when the turnkey came in and said that a Mr. Davis wanted me.

"If he wags his tail when you call him Shorty," I instructed him, "let him come up, because he's absolutely harmless."

Shorty was in a bad way. He was nervous and excited, as if the limited had missed his dog-house by less than a car length.

"I've just seen the evening paper," he exclaimed as he slammed the door behind him. "Dave, what kind of a game have you got into? You had no more to do with that wreck than I did, and yet the evening paper says they are going to charge you with it in the criminal court to-morrow morning!"

"Everybody but you seems to think I know all about that wreck," I replied.

"You're going to fight them, of course," Shorty said. "Do you need any money and what can I do, Dave?"

"Shorty, it never occurred to me that you were any good except to quarrel with," I said as I stuck out my mitt to him. "You are the first person to come in here and offer to back your friendship with your bank-roll, and just to show you how much I appreciate it, I'm not going to permit you to do it."

"I can't remember of a fellow getting in trouble but what you kicked in with a generous piece of tin, Dave, and if you'll just say the word I'll raise a thousand dollars overnight."

"A thousand dollars—why I'll make more than that"—I pulled the air on myself and backed in on another lead. "Shorty, don't you care! I'm going to have my fun out of this and if I burn a crown sheet it will be no one's fault but my own.

"Just keep your mouth shut and your eyes open and remember that I believe I have an ace up my sleeve. If I haven't got an ace I've got a queen and, never having had a romance or a real adventure in my young life, I'm going to see if it's because I've been running by the signals and didn't know them."

"What do you mean?" Shorty asked.

"I don't know exactly what I do mean. But I'm going to plead guilty to this charge of train-wrecking and see what happens."

"You know what will happen," Shorty said with astonishment sticking on his face like a number-plate. "The pen will happen. You'd better let me go out and call a full crew of legal talent and get ready to fight."

"No, Shorty," I replied. "All I want you to do is to remember I didn't wreck this train and then let nature run its course."

Shorty and I argued until midnight, and the result of it was that Shorty went away convinced I was crazy.

It was just ten twenty the next morning when Tinker, looking as gloomy as a flat car that had been mashed between a couple of loads, came in.

"They'll be here for you in ten minutes," he said in about the same cheerful tone the fireman uses when he comes back from fishing in the tank and tells you the water's gone and you'll have to cut and run for a tank.

"Tell me what you want me to do. Don't be a fool, Mr. Kendall, make a fight. We can get time to prepare for trial. You've got some rights even if you are a prisoner. All I'll have to do is to ask the court for a delay and you'll get it and—"

"Oh, let's have it over with all in one lump!" I replied. "You've done everything you could to earn your money, so don't worry."

Tinker still was urging me to fight when the deputy came in and said the court was waiting on us.

Fifteen minutes later we were in the criminal court-room.

They stood me up before the judge and read off the 1178 report.

It was full of that "whereas and aforesaid" stuff and I could have said all it said in less than half the language it used.

I didn't pay much attention to the reading because just as I went through the gate leading to the vestibule before the judge's bench, I was handed a long envelope. I tore it open at the end and, after looking at the contents carefully for about a minute, I began to see that there had been thrust upon me three one-thousand-dollar bills.

I was squinting in the envelope for my sixth look at the three plasters when the judge asked something about how the defendant pleads.

Tinker stepped up beside me and began.

"May it please your honor—"

I spoke up in meeting and told Tinker I was the defendant and, being present in person, so to speak, if the court had no objections I'd speak for myself

That didn't appear to be quite according to the Standard Book of Rules, but the judge finally consented, after the State's attorney explained I had waived a preliminary hearing.

"I plead guilty until I prove myself otherwise."

The judge looked at me over his headlights:

"My suggestion to the defendant is that he permit his attorney to take charge of his defense."

"No," I insisted, "I've got other work for the lawyer. Just let it go—guilty."

"You mean you wrecked this train?" the judged asked

"I mean I'm pleading guilty," I replied.

"You understand, of course, you have a right to trial by jury. The court is willing that you should have ample time to prepare for trial."

"I understand that," I replied, "but my observation of trials leads me to believe that a fellow who thinks well of himself hadn't better go in for them, because by the time the verdict comes in he's going to be wondering how in the world he managed to live with himself so long.

"My past life is all right, as I see it now, and I'm willing to let it remain so. Just check me up guilty and don't prove anything on me."

The judge demurred. I think that's what

he did. At any rate, demurred is a good word because the prosecuting attorney used it

I insisted and, it seems, when it comes to pleading guilty, the prisoner has the last say

I took the trick and the plea of guilty was allowed to stand. The judge wanted to take the case under advisement for a few days, but again I insisted we clean up the job while we were at it because I didn't want to be running over to the court-house every day or so.

Tinker finally got in his work, insisting that before the judge passed sentence he should hear what Doc had to say. Doc told them I had recently been in a bad accident and, in his opinion, I might not be just right in my head. Then Shorty Davis informed the court that I had been acting "queer" for some time.

The judge made a speech after that and said that train-wrecking was a nasty, mean business; that the proceedings in this case were not to his liking, that he preferred I should stand trial, that the doctor's remarks taken in relation to my own behavior in the court-room led him to believe a trial would develop interesting facts to the advantage of the defendant.

After all that whistle-blowing and bell-ringing he said he had nothing to do but assess a sentence since I insisted and, in view of all the circumstances, he could not bring himself to send me to the penitentiary. He would, therefore, make the sentence so that I might remain in the county jail under surveillance of my attorney and friends.

He intimated that if new evidence was found there would be a way to reopen the case, and then he sentenced me to eleven thousand dollars in the county jail.

He said eleven months, but, with three thousand dollars in my pocket, I had every reason to believe that the switches were lined up and the main stem was clear for me to drag down that thousand dollars a month for each month I lingered in the little round-house with the steel shutters.

The trial went off according to schedule, but I'll say I ruined my dinner. The jail call-boy had it all spread out for me when I got back and I was just getting down to it with the consciousness that I had gone through with my markers out and my flags flying when the thought flashed in my mind.

"Maybe those bills are phoney!"

The thought made me sick. I had the turnkey call Steiger. I sent him running to the bank to see if the bills were good.

I walked the floor while he was gone and I could have done a hundred miles with fifty cars of coal in less time than it took him to go four blocks and return with change for three one-thousand-dollar bills.

But he finally registered in.

"What's the answer?" I asked, feeling just like I did the day I went to the master-mechanic to see how I came out on my exam for the right side of the cab

"Vy, Dafe, the answer already ees one pocket full of money und a order for two thousant dollars in Liberty Bonds."

"Liberty Bonds?" I repeated. "Who said anything about Liberty Bonds?"

"Vell, don't the government needs the money, Dafe? Und vat good ees it by you in jail? Here is a thousand in hundreds und twenties und that's too much to keep by you ven you don't need it, but the government does."

CHAPTER IX.

A ROMANCE—AND OTHER THINGS.

THEY say that a man's emotions dominate his intellect. That may be true providing one has an intellect to be dominated.

After I had been more or less on the spot in the county jail for three weeks, notwithstanding the fact that I was treated with as much consideration as would be unloaded on a railroad magnate in a private sanatorium for the gout, I began to suspect that if ever I had an intellect it was lost, strayed, or stolen

There wasn't any way for me to fool myself about the mess I had plunged into. If you want to know how much a thousand dollars isn't, just go to jail for a month and see how many things like fresh air, and sunshine, and walks in the cool of the evening it won't buy.

Three weeks of the highest life they could

switch out in that jail convinced me I had been laboring under an illusion. I used to think I followed an engine and put up with the dog's life of a railroad man because I wanted the money.

That isn't it. I'll say that's all wrong. I follow an engine because I like to wrangle with the call-boy, fuss with the shop foreman, and cuss the conductors.

Just think of being in jail for three weeks without a chance to cuss a conductor or bawl out the shack on the cinder-end because he made you stop when he didn't get the siding switch open in time for you to head in on the run!

I follow an engine because it's a lot of fun to tell some hammer-headed yardmaster that the engine can't pull as much tonnage as he's switched out for it—and then go ahead and pull it. There isn't any sport I know of better than yelling like a flue-roller when the despatcher puts you on a schedule, showing him that it's a mathematical impossibility to keep within telegraph distance of the time—and then go out and beat it!

Oh, boy! It's some real life even if you are forced to take pay for it!

But that's *immatistical*, as the call-boy used to say when I told him I hadn't had my eight hours' rest. The thing that really got me foaming was the fact that in those three weeks of jail life a certain young lady with a persuasive voice and eyes that just looked you over and made you feel tame, didn't call on me.

Of course, she hadn't promised to call on me. That wasn't part of the bargain, and yet I'm sure I expected her to drop in when she could find time, and tell me how sweet it was of me to plead guilty for a thousand dollars a month, not because I was guilty, but just because she asked me to.

It was along in the third week when I began to do a little mental running on a new track. I checked over my way-bills to see just what shipments of evidence I had unloaded to convince myself that Miss Clark was working for the government.

About all I found was that I had an imagination that ought to do well on the stage or writing poetry.

By the beginning of the fourth week I began to see that it would be convenient for a gang of train-wreckers and plotters to have the public and the officials believe they had rounded up the criminal and had him safely tucked away in the booby-hatch: I began to realize that a thousand dollars a month wasn't any money to pay if that sum diverted suspicion from a gang of enemy agents while they put over a few tricks like blowing up a warehouse or an ammunition-plant.

By the end of the fourth week I was sure the only person in the world who would pay a man a thousand dollars a month for being in jail was a German agent who was getting his money's worth in some other field.

During those four weeks I had Shorty Davis and Steiger working on my case from the outside, but they brought me nothing very assuring. Steiger said that Rainbow hadn't sent in for eggs and Shorty said that Miss Clark hadn't been in town since the day I pleaded guilty—not to being a train-wrecker, but just a common, side-track variety of mutthead.

I was admitting to myself, of course—that the recollection of a soft, cool hand resting on my hurting head had made me an aid and comfort to the enemy of my country.

That was what made me feel like I'd swallowed a red-hot slice-bar! Being in jail didn't matter.

Then one night Steiger came in, all excited. Rainbow had received another crate of eggs from Morrowton. It was the same old story; some of the fillers were full and others were empty.

The next morning Shorty Davis came in with the news that Miss Clark was in town again. For the rest of that day I felt like I was pulling freight in zero weather, hot on one side and cold on the other.

One minute I was all excitement in anticipation of Miss Clark's calling to explain to me how, by taking her at her word, I had played an important part in some undertaking of exceptional value to the government.

The next minute I wanted her to show up so I could tell her what I thought of her for having made me the goat for a bunch of German plotters.

Another day passed with things as exciting as a rip track. I had had my evening's feast and was pacing the floor, trying to argue myself out of the determination to send for Tinker, my lawyer, with a view of giving him orders to see what he could do toward getting me out of the blind siding I had pulled in on, and apparently lost all my time-card rights.

One big Dave Kendall, the same being me, had been calling himself names for about two hours when the turnkey came up and asked me if I was prepared for company.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"The lady," he replied.

"May I come in?" she asked from the hall.

"If you think it's safe, I have no objections," I replied, and the turnkey stepped aside and she entered the room, holding out her hand to me.

"How's the prisoner?" she asked. "Well, I hope!"

The turnkey went out and closed the door and there was I face to face—and hers was a pretty face, too—with a government agent or a German plotter—and I didn't know which.

I invited her to sit, but she declined, saying:

"Another time, Mr. Kendall. I'm in a hurry to-night and have an interesting piece of work ahead. It occurred to me that you might like to see the finish of a little drama in which you have played a part."

"What part have I been playing, the poor boob who gets the gold brick?"

She laughed and insisted I'd find out soon I'd been playing one of the leading rôles, and then continued:

"You know that old station building pretty well, I take it, else you wouldn't have been hanging around the window in the blue-print room that night.

"There's a troop-train due in here at eleven o'clock. It changes engines, of course, so it will be here in about fifteen minutes.

"That should be an interesting fifteen minutes and if you happened to be in the little room at the east end of the hall on the second floor of the station building, and keep quiet, you'll probably be surprised at what you hear. Also, if you watch the ceiling of the closet you may see something interesting."

"But I've got as much chance to be there as a dead engine has of making passenger time on the up-side of a mountain grade. You forget I'm a prisoner."

"If you wait five or ten minutes after I'm gone and then walk down and through the office no one will molest you."

"And when the show's over I'll come back to jail, I suppose," I said.

"When the show is over there'll be no need for you to go back to jail," she replied. "In fact, it's apt to be so crowded there will be no room for you."

"And to think," I blurted out, "half an hour ago I was thinking that you were a German agent!"

"Why, Mr. Kendall!" she exclaimed. "I never did think that of you, never!"

"Thanks," I replied, not knowing what else to say. "I'll try to be at your party."

"Of course, you understand, you're to get to that closet without being seen by—well, by any one on the second floor."

She cautioned me a second time about being careful and departed, leaving me to come along as the second section, so to speak, the which I did some ten minutes later, walking out by the front entrance just as if I owned the dive.

I drifted over to the west end of the station-house and stalled around in the shadows, avoiding everybody and just waiting for a chance to duck up the west stairs to the second floor of the building.

The west end of the upper floor was dark and, unless some clerk who wanted to make himself superintendent within thirty days was working overtime some place in the building, I didn't stand much chance of bumping into any one after I got through the lighted hall on the first floor, and up the stairs.

Ready to make a stall at checking up my watch with the official time-piece in the despatcher's office just inside the first door of the hall on the first floor, if I bumped into any one, I drifted toward the entrance.

"Oh, Dafe! I say, how is it you?"

I was in the doorway, under the light,

and that was Steiger's voice behind me on the platform.

It wouldn't do to turn back. I ducked on into the hall, up the stairs, two steps at a time, turned to the east in the dark above, and made myself scarce in a doorway

A minute or two I waited to see what happened and as nothing did, I slipped on down the hall to the east end. There was a light showing through beneath the door into Rainbow's office.

The storage closet for which I had running orders was to the left. I got to the door, opened it and stepped into as dark a little hole as one would want to find. I closed the door and started in to pump up my train-line a little.

Voices sounded. They were subdued, but so distinct that, for a minute, I thought others were in the closet with me. At first, in my astonishment, I made no attempt to understand what was being said.

Two or three persons were talking at the same time, but when only one voice sounded, and it the voice of Miss Clark, I threw my ears forward like an elephant and harkened with all my little might.

"Haven't I done everything I've been asked to do?" she was saying. "Didn't I find a victim for the last job and isn't he in jail over there right now?"

"You saw Beaurette in Morrowton, and no one playing fair with us sees Beaurette, of the secret-service department."

Whoever was talking to Miss Clark owned a nasty tone of voice.

I wanted to see the size of the fellow who was the father of that voice and I remembered Miss Clark's reference to the ceiling.

I looked up, and saw something interesting.

In a space about eighteen inches square was an inverted picture of most of the next room. It took me a while to get used to the upside-downness of it, but when I once caught on to it I wasn't slow to make out Rainbow Stebbins seated on the corner of a flat-top desk and Miss Clark sitting near by in the office chair.

There were two men other than Rainbow in the room and neither of them looked familiar. Neither of them looked respectable, either, as far as that goes.

"Well, if the game doesn't go through you'll never block another one."

Evidently that nasty voice belonged to Rainbow, because the picture above me showed he was shaking a clenched fist at Miss Clark while the words were being spoken.

"Don't get excited, captain," some one admonished, and I was sure there was a slight German twist to the words. "Everything may be all right. Nobody's hurt yet."

Then there was silence for a time and I heard the rumble of the troop-train pulling in at the platform below. By watching the mirror in the ceiling above me I could see that the two men were having a hard time to keep still.

Rainbow continued to hang onto the corner of the desk and seemed to be watching Miss Clark. Then he pulled out his watch.

"The lieutenant should be showing up," he said. "If he doesn't come in two minutes we'll know how to treat a government agent."

Rainbow held his watch in his hand and nervously swung back and forth his foot, which was hanging over the desk corner.

"Frieberg, go to the bottom of the stairs and take a look. Don't waste any time. Be back here in two minutes."

Rainbow was giving the orders. He seemed to be the yardmaster.

The shorter one of the two men started for the door. His hand was on the knob when, down in the yard, the switch-engine must have run onto a lone torpedo.

There was just one sharp explosion. I didn't know just what it was, but it had an unexpected effect on Rainbow.

"You lying witch!" he hissed as he made a lunge at Miss Clark. "You've double-crossed us.

"Here, Frieberg, get that heavy cord on the table in the next room. Reutig, give me a gag."

It began to look to me as if I was in for playing the hero in a sawmill scene and I hadn't rehearsed the part. I didn't know the cue and I was afraid I'd get out on the stage at the wrong time and, maybe, get a load of cabbage and carrots from the audience and a bawling-out from the heroine.

I was just ready to break out of my private box and break in the door to the office, when it occurred to me I was just an invited guest, seeing the show on a pass, so to speak, and I ought to be mighty slow shoving in without a signal. I hung back for a minute and, at first, was glad I did, for just then I was sure I heard hurried footsteps on the stairs. They heard them in the room beyond.

"Give me a gun," I heard Rainbow say excitedly. "Everybody for himself. Maybe we can rush one of the engines and get a start east. Better take to—"

I knew the show was going to break up if I had to break it up. I stepped out of my little closet.

The door to the office was at my right. It wasn't locked. I tried it easy and it opened, and then I went into the room all in a bunch, as it were.

All I saw of the two men were their heels as they made it through the door into the blue-printing and drafting-room. Rainbow turned from Miss Clark and took a hasty shot at me.

I guess the bullet would have struck my face if I hadn't shut my eyes or, maybe, the wild grab I made for his hand knocked the automatic to one side. It fell to the floor and Rainbow made a leap for the door through which his friends had departed.

Just then two men rushed in from the hall. Seeing that Miss Clark was bound in the chair I pulled my pocket-knife and cut her loose while the two men hurried on into the blue-print room.

"They must not get away!" Miss Clark said faintly. "They'll try to get an engine in the yard. They've dropped out the window. Quick, down-stairs."

"I'm gone hence," I said

"Take me," she exclaimed as she sprang from the chair and followed.

I reached back and grabbed her hand.

"You surely are *took*," I told her as I swung her around the sharp turn in the hall to the stairs and we floated down them, hitting only about every third one.

Once on the platform we had two guesses as to which way the cutthroats went: east or west.

We ran around the east end of the building, hoping that we might catch sight of them. I went to the rear of the building, half hoping that one of them had been injured in the drop from the window and that I should find him there on the cement walk where I once superimposed myself on the strong limb of the law.

Nothing doing! That sort never die that way.

As I ran back to Miss Clark at the east end of the building, about ten car lengths down the yard, I saw an engineer's torch describe an arc and fall to the ground and, a minute later, the engine that was slated to pull the soldiers east began moving out without the train

"There they go, Miss Clark!" I exclaimed as I pointed down the yard.

"They must not get away, Mr. Kendall. They are the worst gang of enemy agents in the Central West."

There wasn't any mistaking the sincerity of the women right then. I knew the welfare of American lives and of war plans depended on getting that bunch of plotters.

Considering the fact that I had no tools worth mentioning to work with, I did a good job of thinking

"Come on, it may be the engine that pulled this string in is on the west-bound main line."

We ran down past the east end of the string of coaches. We ignored Charlie Barman's query of "What th' 'ell's going on here?"

Charlie, having just been thrown off the deck of his own engine, only to see the teapot roll away with three unknown men on it, may be excused if he used some vulgar Latin in the passing presence of a lady.

A red eye shining through the night some fifty yards beyond us told me that Tom Murphy and his fire-boy had gone in to have a cup of Java before rolling their bulgine over to the roundhouse lead.

"You stay here," I told Miss Clark.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "It's my work. Get on and help me up."

With the other engine getting under way all the time, even if I was no more of a gentleman than to argue with a woman, I couldn't afford to lose the time.

I swung onto the deck, yanked the young

lady up, opened the throttle, threw in four scoops of coal, saw there was a half glass of water, yanked the throttle wider, told Miss Clark to get on the fireman's seat-box, and then I turned off the juice on the headlight.

I just made one mistake. That woman had no business on that engine.

It was against the rules to begin with, and when a fellow knows it's a ten-to-one shot that he's on the main line for eternity, he shouldn't have a passenger who doesn't know but that she's out on a joy ride.

The layout was just this. It is twenty-four miles from Thornville to the cross-over at the Narrows. From Thornville to the Narrows are twenty-four miles of straight, level, double-track

Through the Blewer marsh, for five miles, notwithstanding the fact that the company spent a fortune trying to find a foundation for both tracks, traffic is handled on a single track. I had a wild idea I could catch that engine before it reached the cross-over.

What I could do with it if I caught it gave me as little concern as it gave the Arizona cow-puncher who caught the black bear with a lariat.

I was heading east on the west-bound main line. If I was lucky I might have the rails to myself. If I wasn't lucky—well, I figured I should see them coming in time to throw a fusee and back away from it.

The engine we stole was a big Prairie type that could make regular time on the hills. The engine the other burglars had was a little Baldwin teapot that couldn't run fast enough to make itself puff on a level track.

With twenty-four miles to do it in I thought I could pick up two miles on them, even though I made a standing start.

Come to think about it, I made another mistake. I didn't pick up that automatic revolver which had been knocked from Rainbow's hand.

Maybe that wasn't a mistake, after all. A revolver is a dangerous weapon. I might have got excited and shot myself.

We tore east on that west bound main line as if we were chasing a pay-car. I just opened her up and forgot about her except to throw in a spoonful of tonic and watch the water glass.

They figured it out afterward, and while no two of them agreed, the general opinion was that we had been traveling somewhere between sixty and one hundred and sixty miles an hour on a part of that trip.

One Dave Kendall, the same being me, who was driving the goat, felt that it was moving like a sick toad, jumping a foot or two every once in a while, but getting no place in particular.

I was dead-sure we'd gone a hundred miles before I could make out the tank on the bulgine ahead of us on the east-bound main line.

Once we got that close I could see we were gaining fast. I stepped over to Miss Clark and tried to carry on a conversation in high G.

"We're going to be even with them soon. What will we do?"

I could hardly hear her. I had to put my head very near hers. Her hair blew over my face. It was the first time that ever happened to me.

"We must get them," she cried. "We must, Mr. Kendall."

"If I beat them to the cross-over and block the main line on them, they'll take to the country, and then what?"

"I haven't even a gun," she said. "They took mine away from me."

I went over to my side of the cab. We were lapping the little engine's tank. I motioned to Miss Clark and held out my hand so that she could steady herself.

When I had her over on my side the cab I told her the only thing I could suggest was that when we were even with them I could jump from our tank to theirs and, if I had something like a Stilson wrench, I thought I could clean up.

I asked her if she thought she could stop the engine after I made the leap.

She believed she could if I'd show her how. I knew I didn't have time to open a school for lady engineers because we were getting mighty close to that cross-over.

We were running cab to cab by this time. They were watching us to see if I was crazy enough to ride to the inevitable wreck that would result if my engine shot across that

cross-over with their engine blocking the line.

I knew we had about two miles to go. I felt sure I could make the cross-over ahead of them, and far enough ahead to clear them, but the switch there always was lined up for a clear board on the east-bound track.

I couldn't stop and line it up, and to take it on the fly was to go plowing onto the ties.

Rainbow Stebbins and his gang knew that just as well as I.

"It's no use, Miss Clark," I yelled to her as she leaned close to me to catch my words. "There's just one way and it won't do."

"If there is one way it must be done," she cried. "Don't think of me for one minute."

"We'll not live to know whether or not we got them," I told her.

"If we get them it doesn't matter, and if we fail I'd rather not know it."

"I can wreck them," I yelled.

"Do it," she commanded only it was more of a pleading voice than a commanding one. "They are enemies of your country."

The flicker of a green light ahead of us warned me that we were perilously close to the spot when debate was useless. A few car-lengths further and I wouldn't be able to plug the engine in time to avert disaster.

Stebbins, in the cab to the right of me, was watching me like a hawk. I eased off on the throttle and made as if I was trying to get the Johnson-bar to neutral

The little engine began to walk away from us. I could see a snarling grin on Stebbins's shadow-swept face.

He cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled something at me. I caught only the words, "yellow swine" and "Yankee quitter." He knew I wasn't game to take a chance on the big showdown.

I guess he'd figured I wouldn't go all the way or else he and his gang would have taken to the country. Well, Rainbow was a wise boy, all right, and if he wanted to believe that I was yellow, just as long as I had half an idea what I was about, I wasn't going to argue with him.

If one Dave Kendall had made up his mind to quit, those words tossed back from Rainbow would have changed his decision. Something down in my innards sort of *riz* up along my spine and into my brain and told me that a fellow could go over the top in an engine-cab and do his bit, just the same as if he were in a trench in France.

Rainbow's iron pony drew ahead until my pilot was just lapping his tender, and by that time I knew, when he saw what I was doing, he couldn't stop in time to save himself even if the thug that was driving the engine used everything he had

"The other side of the cab! 'Way up near the front of it!" I yelled to Miss Clark, and then I pulled the throttle wide open again.

"I'll ride where you ride," the woman said to me, and again she leaned so close that her hair brushed my cheek

There wasn't anything more that I could do. It was just a matter of seconds, and if my judgment was good that old Prairie type would be plowing into the other engine's cab.

Dippy Moore once said that if my brains were placed in the middle of a ten-cent piece there would be a complete demonstration of human intelligence completely surrounded by a sea of money.

Maybe I was all wrong, but I figured that when we struck, the straight-ahead impetus of the other engine would tend to throw the Prairie type straight to the east, while its impact would probably throw the lighter engine off the right-of-way and down the embankment.

There was, I thought, just a bare chance my engine would remain on the crown of the road-bed.

The engine gave a lunge to the right and I knew the rails were leading us to—well, I lunged for the other side of the cab, taking the woman in my arms, hoping that, somehow, my big, awkward hulk would shield her.

In the same instant there came a great, grinding crash as the two iron racers went together. I had managed to get to the fireman's side and in the clear of the boiler-head.

The impact hurled us toward the head

end. My head struck the cab-frame. I saw the tender upending and coming down on us

Then everything faded. Blackness—worse than that of any night of flood and storm—settled over us.

I knew what it was. It was the blackness of the corridor to eternity. I was a little afraid.

I held the woman close to me, tight to me, because she was a brave woman and I felt I could trust her in the blackness of the vestibule to eternity.

CHAPTER X.

THE COURT APPOINTS A GUARDIAN.

I'LL be tightening a grease cup some day and the wrench will slip and bruise my thumb and, following a long, lingering illness, I'll die of lockjaw. If it ain't that I'll probably swallow a fish-bone or step on a tack or get the pip and shuffle off, surrounded by a lot of bill-collectors and a few friends.

There's nothing that can be cooked up on a railroad which will make the final entry on my personal-record sheet. I've been vaccinated and even head-on collisions won't take on me!

Big Dave Kendall, the same being sorely perplexed as to whether it was me or not, found himself stretched out sort of on the bias at the base of a ten-foot hill

Away off, above me, there were hundreds of twinkling lights. I wasn't sure whether they were stars or switch-lights. I was looking at them, trying to decide when a head and shoulders shut them from my view and something soft and silky and ticklish brushed my face.

Hers was a familiar face and, in the starlight, it looked so kind that I was sure she would be glad to tell me what I wanted most to know.

"I suppose this is eternity," I said.

"No, no, Dave! This is the last stop this side eternity," and with that she drew back from me and laughed and laughed and laughed, between spasms, crying "Alive! Alive!"

I was willing to take her word for it, although I was sure I wasn't enough alive to justify any wild hilarity, which isn't surprising, I suppose, seeing as how when I finally checked up I found myself with a broken leg and half of my scalp, including my hair, gone.

It was her hair brushing against my face that put me right again. I raised my hand to her head and touched her to be sure she was flesh and blood.

She was on her knees beside me, and when I touched her she ceased laughing, seized my hand in both hers and said, slowly:

"You are alive and I'm alive with you."

She was right, but neither of us were enough alive to be able to climb up the embankment to the mountain of twisting, simmering iron.

Perhaps she could have gone, but I didn't want her to. I told her it didn't make any difference what was up there, anyhow. We'd done the best we could and I'd get canned for maliciously breaking up company property and we should worry whether school kept or not.

We just remained there at the foot of the embankment, listening to the frogs singing over in the Blewer marshes, until they came out from Thornville to look for us.

When a fellow don't care whether he's found in a hurry or not, it's wonderful how keen a searching party can be. It couldn't have been more than twenty or thirty minutes before we heard them coming.

They brought a flat-car of soldiers with them and we, Miss Clark and I, were the first ones they discovered. It was that Arthur person, the personal-injury agent, and a couple of doughboys who found us first, but that wasn't their fault, because when Miss Clark heard them on the track above she whistled until they came.

Arthur seemed almost as astonished and as glad as we were to find us alive. He was real decent in the way he superintended the job of picking me up and carrying me back to the flat-car behind the goat

The soldiers carried me, and Miss Clark walked with the assistance of a soldier on one side and Arthur on the other.

In five or ten minutes another squad of soldiers came up from the other side of the embankment. They had two men.

When they passed them up on the flat-car Arthur took a look at them, and as he came back to where I was stretched out with Miss Clark seated at my side, he said:

"Frieberg and that low-life, Reutig. Frieberg's hip is broken and the other traitor is done for. Neck broken."

Another five minutes and a lieutenant came back to the car to tell Arthur there appeared to be no others to be picked up.

"Do you believe Stebbins could have escaped?" Arthur asked of Miss Clark, and I replied:

"I think you'll find what remains of him on the left side of where the cab should be."

That *was* where they found what was left of him, which wasn't enough to hang an iron cross on even if it had been sent back to its master.

"How about Frazzen and Blurhauser?" Miss Clark asked.

"We came near slipping up on Blurhauser. Got Frazzen right in the act, but Blurhauser—well, old man Steiger, who seems to be the self-appointed guardian of every troop-train that comes in these nights, stumbled onto Blurhauser just as he was crawling under the car.

"Steiger insisted on knowing what the fellow was doing, and Barney, seeing that Steiger was going to scare the bird away, swung off the coach. Blurhauser darted past Steiger, who grabbed him, and Blurhauser shot the Dutchman in the shoulder."

"That was the shot that told Stebbins the jig was up," Miss Clark volunteered.

"Also, it was the cause of Shipley and Martin being slow in closing in on the hall."

"And you got Blurhauser?" Miss Clark asked.

"Only because the Dutchman, when he fell, grabbed his foot and tripped him, and before he could get into action again Barney was on him."

"Have you heard from Morrowton?"

"A clean job, all five of them and enough bombs to blow up a dozen plants."

An hour later I had my old run in the hospital and, when I insisted, they said they would try to get my old nurse back, and they did, a day later.

You don't hear much about the inside of these secret-service activities. No, those boys keep their mouths shut and stay away from the newspapers, but that little affair at the cross-over just this side the single track through Blewer's marsh was of such a nature that it broke in on the first page of the newspapers.

They didn't have it right at that! Dutch Steiger and I got all the credit.

There wasn't even a mention of Miss Clark, or Arthur or Shipley, Martin, Barney, or the others who had been trailing that bunch of plotters for six months.

But a fellow can get confidential with his nurse. And his nurse, when she feels it her duty to get her patient out of jail and square him with the court, will, providing the court promises to keep its mouth shut, tell the inside story.

This gang had been wrecking ammunition cars and trying to wreck troop-trains with a simple little device which they would fit to the floor of a car just above a wheel. A spring arrangement kept a steel bit pressed heavily against the wheel just at the base of the flange

As the wheel turned the bit cut in until the grove was so deep that the least pressure would break off the flange.

Miss Clark had played on the inside with the gang. She had tipped them off to the furniture car of ammunition that wouldn't *am*.

It was a plant, with traps cut in the bottom of the car over each truck. She had climbed in that car to find out just what the device was and how it worked, because Rainbow was determined to keep his own patent to himself.

She didn't dare to block the game that day because the department was closing in on the gang and knew, if they didn't get shy, the whole rotten bunch would be rounded up together. Miss Clark went into that car through the end door and went out through the floor above the rear trucks and the airplane that flew that afternoon from Thornville to Morrowton, ostensibly advertising the approaching Liberty Loan drive, carried her and Arthur to Morrowton in time so they were able to check up Potsheimer in passing the word to the rest of the Morrowton gang that another job had been successful.

Rainbow discovered that the wrecked car was sawdust rather than dynamite, and right there was where he began to suspect Miss Clark of playing double.

When I got to hobbling around on crutches, Arthur, Miss Clark, and the chief of police and I made a quiet call on the judge of the criminal court.

Arthur and Miss Clark did the talking. It was an interesting visit.

I don't know what the court did to the record. I think he said the case was nonplused or something like that, and then he took a long, hard squint at me over his headlights and remarked:

"The court remands you to the custody of your guardian. Miss Clark, please see to it that he doesn't get in here again."

She got awful red, and Arthur said something smart and we hobbled out—that is, I did—and when Miss Clark and I were working our way back to the hospital, slowlike so as to favor my flat wheel, I asked:

"Are you going to take the job?"

"It is a court order," she replied, "and I wouldn't like to be jailed for contempt."

(The end.)

ANOTHER DAY.

BY IZOLA FORRESTER.

WERE you ever down and out, boys, and all the world looked blue?
Did it ever seem that every friend had turned his back on you?
Did you ever wonder which Dutch route would prove the easiest way?
And clean forgot that, always, to-morrow's another day.

You thought you'd lost your grip on things, they didn't look the same.
It seemed as if the other guy had tried to queer the game.
You asked yourself, "Oh, what's the use of bucking down the line?"
You forgot that in the morning, perhaps, the sun might shine.

The world's a looking-glass, they say. Why don't you try to smile?
Why don't you drop the grouch and blues, just for a little while?
And if you feel like reaching out toward the angel wings,
Just tighten up your belt a bit, and think of other things.

You remember how your mother used to plan about her boy?
Did you ever try to live up to her dreams of earthly joy?
You couldn't have been President, but you might have been a man,
And not a broken quitter, or a beaten "also ran."

It isn't always favorites that hit the winning post.
Sometimes an unknown dark horse shows form and speed the most.
And while you've got life in you, you're entered for the race.
If you can't pull out as winner, just try for show or place.

Stop thinking how you'd like to run the other fellow's game.
Stop practising the fancy twirls on Rockefeller's name.
Don't waste your time a figuring what Astor gets a day.
It only takes one ocean wave to wash it all away.

It isn't such a rotten world as all you fellows think.
Takes more than all your doings to put it on the blink.
There's the same old sun a shining, so buck up, pal, and say,
They've got it on you now, perhaps, but to-morrow's another day.

OLD TIMES ON THE QUEEN & CRESCENT.

Three Separate Systems—the New Orleans and Northeastern, Alabama Great Southern and Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific—Links in Popular Route between North and South.

SOUTHERN KINDNESS MADE IT BOOMERS' JOY.

The "Grab Car" a Big Feature of Railroading to the Colored Brother—Mountaineers Didn't Take Kindly to Strangers—City's Investment in Railroad Turned Out Well—Vacancies Caused by Death Only.

BY "J. E. M."

Author of "Old Times on the 'Gee Whiz,'" "Old Times on the El Paso Southwestern," "Old Times on the Billy Oh," etc.

HE Queen and Crescent, although running through trains from one end of the route to the other — from Cincinnati, Ohio, the "Queen City," on the north, to New Orleans, Louisiana, the "Crescent City," on the south—was not one road. Neither was it one system. But the traveler who boarded one of the luxurious trains at either of the above cities was carried through to the other terminal over the very best of track and the finest of road-beds on what was apparently one road, under one management. For the working conditions were perfect and the machinery carefully greased.

Three Roads in Route.

The Queen and Crescent Route was composed of two separate and distinct systems, which, in turn, were made up of three separate and distinct railroads. Indeed, I might say with perfect truth that there were five roads comprising the two systems, although two of them, properly speaking, were not component parts of the Queen and Crescent Route proper, although almost invariably referred to as parts of it. These two offshoots were the Alabama and Vicksburg and the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific. The former had its eastern terminus at Meridian, Mississippi, while its western end was at Vicksburg, in the same State. The latter started at Vicksburg and ended at Shreveport, Louisiana.

The lines comprising the Queen and Crescent Route proper were the New Orleans and Northeastern, the Alabama Great Southern and the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific. The New Orleans and Northeastern ran a distance of two hundred and two miles, from New Orleans to Meridian, Mississippi; the Alabama Great Southern covered approximately three hundred miles from Meridian to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific took care of the remaining four hundred or more miles from the latter point to Cincinnati, Ohio.

But the old Queen and Crescent Route is a glory departed. A few years ago it was merged with the great Southern Railway System and is no longer known by its distinctive name.

The history of this famous and beautiful route between the North and the South makes mighty interesting reading, but, as this article is in no way intended as a textbook nor a history, but merely as a chat on "old times" on the route, I am compelled to eliminate much that would be of historic value. However, it would be incomplete indeed without some brief mention of how the first link in the chain of what became the Queen and Crescent Route—that portion between Cincinnati and Chattanooga, known as the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railroad—came to be built.

How N. O. and T. P. Came To Be Built.

In the first place, strange as it may appear, there was no such thing as the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railroad. There was, however, a Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railroad *Company*—get me?—which operated a railroad, the charter name of which was the Cincinnati Southern Railroad. This line was built by the city of Cincinnati, and, so far as I know, was the only wholly municipally owned steam railroad in the country. The city operated it for but a month or two, however, and then leased it for a long term of years to an operating company, known as the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railroad Company. Later, this company turned over its lease to the Southern Railway, which had already attained control of the Alabama Great Southern the central link in the chain of the Queen and Crescent Route.

Only Steam Line Built By City.

As early as 1836 the question of building a railroad from Cincinnati to the South was agitated, but nothing came of the project. The immense river traffic moving down the Ohio to the Mississippi, and thence to the western frontier, had been the making of Cincinnati. But with the completion of three railroads from the East to the Mississippi, this river traffic was pretty well cut off, and when, in 1859, the Louisville and Nashville had laid its rails between the cities from which it took its name, it cut Cincinnati off from every Southern city in a direct line.

During the Civil War, General Burnside, the commander of the Army of Eastern Tennessee, recommended to President Lincoln the building of a railroad from Cincinnati to Knoxville, Tennessee, as a line of communication. Although the recommendation of the general was not acted upon, he was given permission to make the necessary surveys. This was done, and although these surveys came to nothing during the war they bore good fruit years later.

Cincinnati realized that a railroad was vitally necessary to her very existence as a city. The State laws of Ohio, however, forbade the issuing of bonds or the granting of any assistance to a railroad by any municipality or county or by the State itself. Matters were in this deadlock when a bright young lawyer of Cincinnati, named Ferguson, decided that although the city could not assist a railroad, or the building of a railroad, there was no law to prevent it from itself building one.

Many Obstacles Overcome.

He placed his idea before the public and it met with instant favor. There was, however, strong opposition in both houses of the Ohio Legislature, but that body eventually passed the enabling act, which, although peculiarly drawn, has stood the test of almost fifty years of continual litigation.

The city of Louisville, Kentucky, was greatly alarmed when the project assumed definite shape. Its citizens believed that the Ohio River traffic which they then enjoyed would be taken back to its original base—Cincinnati. Accordingly, the Legislature of the State of Kentucky was appealed to, and passed a bill, the object of which was to kill the Cincinnati Southern Railroad by taxation. But eventually all obstacles were overcome and the road was built to Chattanooga, being completed about 1870 or 1871.

One of the most interesting features of this peculiar undertaking is that the road was excellently constructed. There were no cheap or shoddy materials employed.

The many and complete surveys made by both the army engineers and afterward by the city of Cincinnati were followed by careful and conscientious building. From

the day of its completion there was no relocation or rebuilding on the road; a fact practically unique among American railroads, the vast majority of which, because of faulty and cheap initial construction, have been compelled to almost rebuild their entire systems.

The Cincinnati Southern's bridge over the Kentucky River, the first cantilever bridge built in America, was, when erected, the highest span in the New World. The Ohio River bridge, from Cincinnati to Ludlow, Kentucky, with a channel span of five hundred and fifteen feet, was said, when built, to be the highest truss span in existence, and was regarded as a marvel of engineering skill. It was visited and inspected by many of the most prominent engineers in the world

Good Investment for Cincy.

Cincinnati spent between $15,000,000 and $20,000,000 in building and equipping her railroad. A few years ago the income to the city exceeded $1,500,000 yearly, and the scale was increasing from year to year. At that time she had derived in rentals something like $47,000,000 on her original investment of $20,000,000. She paid 7.3 per cent interest on the bonds issued for the construction of the road, and an old timer who should know told me some time ago that he had known the time when the city was compelled to turn out the street lights on moonlight nights to save money with which to pay interest on the bonds.

Such was the beginning of the first link of the famous Queen and Crescent Route.

Along in the middle 80's, when I first had personal knowledge of the Queen and Crescent, the general offices were located in Cincinnati, that is, the general offices of the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific were. I am not sure of the name of the general manager at that time, although it runs in my mind that it was Malone

The division headquarters were at Somerset, Kentucky, midway between Cincinnati and Chattanooga, where Mr. C. S. Johnston was the division superintendent. R. A. McGivern was the trainmaster and chief despatcher, while the brothers Coppage—Tom, later superintendent of transportation of the Frisco Lines, at Springfield, Missouri; and W. H., who later became general superintendent of the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company, with headquarters in Shreveport, Louisiana were working the first and second tricks respectively. "Billy" Carney worked the third.

Their jurisdiction extended over the entire road, from Cincinnati to Chattanooga, and they had some hard job, believe me. The country traversed was a mountainous one at that time, and the road had but few towns of any importance along its right-of-way. The passenger-crews covered the entire line, while the freight runs were from Cincinnati to Somerset, and from Somerset to Chattanooga.

The freight-crews were run "first in, first out" in either direction out of Somerset; that is, if Conductor Smith registered in from Cincinnati on No. 32, and his was the only crew in the yard when No. 32 was called for the Southern District—Somerset to Chattanooga — Conductor Smith and his crew took the train to that terminal. Here the process might be repeated, only he was returned to Somerset, and it might be that his next call would be a return trip to Chattanooga.

A Four-Week Freight Run.

Many of the men, up to the late 80's, made their homes in either Cincinnati or Chattanooga, but, by reason of this system of "first in, first out," they were sometimes away for many days—it was all a matter of chance with them. I know of one particular case where a conductor and his crew, who resided in Chattanooga and who left on an extra north-bound one Monday morning did not see their families again for *four weeks*. As a railroad man once facetiously remarked to me:

"Every other trip I make to the home town I have to become reacquainted with my wife and little ones."

This state of affairs was of course highly unsatisfactory. So gradually the railroad men began buying lots and erecting homes at Somerset, the logical place for them to live while on freight runs. When I was

last there, Somerset was almost wholly a railroad town. A thriving, bustling, up-to-date place, too; but its very existence depends upon the railroad, and the railroad men and their families.

The general shops of the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific were located there, as well as the division headquarters. The storehouse, and that peculiar institution, the railroad commissary, maintained by most of the railroads throughout that section of the country, were also located at Somerset.

Commissaries Patronized by Colored Rails.

At these commissaries employees of the road may purchase groceries, dry-goods, provisions, clothing, candies, toys, farming implements, and goodness knows what not. The value of the goods purchased is charged against the wages of the employee and deducted from the pay-check of the current month. Not many of the white employees avail themselves of the accommodation of the commissary. It is maintained principally for the accommodation of the negro employees, who comprise the section men, roundhouse engine wipers, and, on the Southern District, in many cases the firemen and brakemen.

It is a well-known fact that the Southern negroes are improvident, and will purchase whatever catches their fancy, if they but have credit. Therefore, if some such provision were not made to take care of the employees and their families it would be next to impossible to retain them in the service.

With the realization that he has credit, limited only to the amount he earns, these simple-colored men and their women folk are very liberal patrons of the commissary. They will purchase anything that the passing fancy dictates, regardless of its general uselessness or its cost.

It not infrequently happens that when pay-day arrives the employee finds that instead of the railroad owing him money he is indebted to the commissary to the tune of several dollars, which is charged up against him on the current month. Usually he scratches his woolly head in bewilderment, remarks, "I jest kain't git dat through my haid nohow, boss," and returns to work, and, in an hour or two, forgets all about it.

Once a month the manager of the commissary loads a stock of miscellaneous goods—dry-goods, boots, shoes, groceries, molasses, coal oil, *et cetera*—into cars provided for that purpose and makes a trip over the road, his cars being attached to the rear of the local freight. These are gala days, second only to circus day, for the negro employees along the line and their families. By reason of their employment at a distance from division headquarters and the commissary these employees have had no opportunity to visit that institution; hence the "grab cars," as they are called, are run for their accommodation.

Accompanied by their wives and shiny-eyed piccaninnies they meet the grab car as the small boy meets the circus; and before the train has come to standstill swarm through the side doors and fairly swamp the attendant clerks with their demands. The stops are of course somewhat limited, and in consequence all the business possible is crowded into the limited time allotted them.

Enter a brawny, six foot negro.

"Ah wants a pair o' pants, boss," he declares with a grin that resembles a watermelon with a slice cut from it lengthwise.

"All right, Jim; here you are," responds the attendant, throwing out the first pair that comes handy.

"But, boss," objects Jim, "I's a six-foot man, I is, an' these here pants are made for a little runt of a four foot man. Dey won't fit me noways, boss—'deed dey won't."

Perfectly Satisfactory—In the End!

"All right, Jim," responds the clerk. "Take 'em home with you and find out what size you wear, and send these back and I'll send you a pair that will fit you. Next!"

And Jim shambles off, with a pair of boy's trousers that would not cover one side of him, clasped to his breast. Such is the rush and hurry, however, that it would be simply impossible to devote much time to trading. Hence the name grab car.

However, when an article taken from the

grab car does not fit, or is unsuitable in any way, it may be sent back to the commissary by baggage-car, without charge, and exchanged. The system of commissary is to-day, I believe, just as it was thirty-five or forty years ago, and it probably will exist as long as these railroads employ negroes as their section-hands and in other classes of rough labor. I once heard a general manager remark that without the commissary it would be next to impossible to operate the railroads successfully in certain portions of the South.

"Uncle George," Veteran of War and Rail.

There was a Queen and Crescent Route—perhaps he is still "on the job" under the new management—conductor, running between Cincinnati and Chattanooga, who had been continuously in the service since 1873, a little matter of only about forty five years or so. Thirty-five years of this time he has spent on that one passenger run. He was known far and wide as "Uncle George." Every man, woman and child on the road knew and loved him.

Born in the rough, rugged mountains of Tennessee, he retained some of the characteristics of his boyhood home. Hale and hearty, with a vigorous step and a keen eye, the last time I saw him he did not look a day over fifty, if that.

Uncle George bore arms for the "lost cause," and wore the butternut and gray of a mountain brigade and won a captaincy in the Confederate Army. So the title usually conferred upon conductors in the South was his by right. But he preferred the more intimate address of Uncle George

When the railroad was an accomplished fact, and the steam cars were running through what had been his father's hillside farm, George was bitten with the railroad bug, and was bitten so badly that he never recovered. In fact, as he laughingly told me some time ago:

"This railroad bug bite is fatal. The disease grows worse as time goes on, and I'm afraid it will kill me some one of these days."

Let us hope, along with the multitude of his friends along his run, that that day may be far distant'

There was one great peculiarity along the entire line of the Queen and Crescent Route—not alone on the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific, but also on the other connecting links—and that is that most of the rails are old employees; men who entered the service in boyhood, stood by it in their youth, still clung to it in their young manhood, and, in their old age, were proud of their connection with it.

The French call it *esprit de corps*. *Esprit de corps* was emphasized on the Queen and Crescent Route to the *n*th degree. I know of one case, on the Alabama Great Southern, where the grandfather was a section foreman, the son a district supervisor of track, and the grandson a division engineer—all on the same division. Neither grandfather, son nor grandson had ever been employed elsewhere, and the grandson was the superior officer of the son, his father, and issued his orders to him regardless of relationship, while he, in turn, told his father, the grandfather of the division engineer, what to do. Nor is this an isolated instance; there are many such.

It may be readily surmised from the foregoing that the Queen and Crescent was not a lighting place for the festive boomer railroad man, be he conductor, brakeman, engineer, fireman, engineer, switchman or telegrapher. But it was a favorite route for these birds of passage in their annual migrations from the North to the South in the fall and early winter months, and from the South to the North in the spring and early summer.

Poor Chance for Boomer.

This was not so true of late years, since the hated Hepburn Law went into effect, restricting the free transportation of the boomer. In bygone years the train-crews on this route were fairly overflowing with proverbial Southern hospitality. If a man had anything whatever to show that he was a railroad man, he was made welcome and carried, or "packed," as they call it, to the end of the run.

Many of the freight-crews, while away from home, did their own cooking in the cabooses, each member of the crew "chipping in" to defray the expenses of pro-

visions, *et cetera*. Indeed, some crews even went so far as to carry a negro cook, or "rube" as he was generally called, to preside over the culinary department.

These were the trains on which the sophisticated boomer endeavored to travel whenever possible. Once having the "captain's" permission to ride, he hied him gleefully to the caboose, selected the softest cushions, stretched himself luxuriously on a locker, and composed himself for restful slumber, secure in the knowledge that when dinner, or supper, or breakfast, as the case might be, was ready, he would be called and his inner man satisfied to repletion with hot biscuits, bacon, eggs, spuds, and coffee galore. In those days on the Queen and Crescent the boomer "should worry."

"Traveling Man's Paradise."

Besides this, at the two extremes, New Orleans on the south, and Cincinnati on the north, there were just oodles of railroad men who had been boomers themselves in their time and generation, and who met their fellows with the glad hand of fellowship and the freemasonry of the road. In addition to these two terminals, there were Chattanooga, Birmingham, and Meridian—all live, up-to-date cities, where a meal could be had for the asking, and more often without asking, and a night's lodging secured from any railroad man by the mere mention that one was tired from traveling.

Oh! Them was the happy days!

But the Hepburn Law put an end to the luxurious riding of the boomer, and the species is fast dying out

In the old days, say thirty years ago, the gentle art of "moonshining," or the illicit distillation of whisky, was one of the principal industries of the mountain regions through which the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific passed, and it was many years after the road had been built and was in operation before the native mountaineer could convince himself that the railroad people were not in league with the hated "reveners," as the United States revenue officers were called.

My first and only job on this section of the Queen and Crescent was as relief night operator at a little mountain station between Chattanooga and Somerset. The regular night man was ill, and at the time they had no available man to relieve him, so I just naturally "horned in."

The agent was a native and was known to every one on the mountainside. I, however, was a rank stranger, and, believe me, in those days a stranger, particularly one hailing from north of the Mason and Dixon line, was looked upon with suspicion with a large capital S.

Upon my arrival I presented my letter of introduction to the agent. He gazed at me a moment with lack-luster eyes, and then, pursing up his lips and taking careful aim, shot a stream of tobacco juice at an industrious tumble-bug, ten feet away in the dust of the road, striking it squarely and rolling it over and over. Then he drawled:

"I reckon you-all is f-om th' No'th?"

I acknowledged that I was from New York State.

"Yas, I reckoned you-all was," he continued as though not deeply interested, "when I see them thar p'inted, yaller shoes you-all is a wearin'. Boys down here don't go much for p'inted shoes—most o' them don't wear no shoes at all. All the reveners f'om th' No'th wear yaller, p'inted shoes—I don't reckon you-all is a revener, be you, mister?"

"Are You a Revener, Mister?"

Although I had, at that time, no fair idea just what a revener was, I assured him that I was not, and that I was perfectly harmless. The agent then instructed me as to my duties, which were simple enough, merely consisting of taking care of ten or twelve switch-lamps, the train-order signal-lamp, the office-lamps, two hand-lamps, red and white, loading and unloading baggage from two passenger-trains, selling tickets for same, walking up the mountainside a half-mile after the United States mail sack, which usually contained nothing, checking freight from the local freight, which was due in the afternoon, but which during my short stay was invariably late and rolled into my station at all hours in the night; making out about

one hundred and fifty expense bills, sweeping out the office and depot and — oh, shucks! All you old-timers know what a nice, easy time a night brass-pounder of thirty or thirty-five years ago had working fourteen to fifteen hours out of the twenty-four. After you finished with the above little chores you could call the balance of the time your own.

Startling Callers.

The first night passed without incident. But on the second night, as I was sitting in the bay window, where the telegrapher instruments were placed, making out expense bills, I became aware that I was the object of sharp scrutiny from a pair of keen, snappy, little, piglike eyes, which bored into me like twin augers and which belonged to a member of the genus mountaineer, clad in the proverbial hickory shirt and the homespun jeans of our forefathers, held up by one suspender.

He carried a long, old-fashioned rifle, of the Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone variety, of the vintage of 1840, and his jaws worked like a well-oiled machine masticating his huge "chaw" of natural leaf, grown, probably, upon his mountainside farm. He was peering through the window at me; and I tell you, even at this late day, that the apparition was some startling, to say the least. Realizing that he had been observed, he addressed me.

"I reckon you-all kin hold up your hands above your haid," he vouchsafed, as he leveled the long rifle at me

I reckoned I could, and I did.

"Now, Lige," said "Old Hickory," as I had already dubbed him, to a heretofore unseen companion, "keep him kivered, till we-all sees if he's a revener."

"Nothin' But a Pore Operator."

From out the shadows stepped a replica of the original Old Hickory. Covering me with his "Davy Crockett" he commanded me to keep still. I did so. What else *could* a poor op do?

The first one strode to the office door, kicked it open with his bare, calloused foot and, entering, commanded me to stand up.

The cold sweat was running down my back-bone in rivulets as I obeyed the command.

In the mean time the man called "Lige" kept me well "kivered." Old Hickory advanced upon me and began a thorough and systematic search of my clothing, letters and person, even to my underwear and shoes—the "p'inted" shoes. Finding nothing suspicious, he called to Lige:

"Hey, thar, Lige! 'He hain't no revener; he hain't got no badge nor nothin'. He don't know nothin'; he's only a pore telegraph operator from th' No'th. Let's git. Good night, sah; an' sorry to have discommoded you-all, sah"

And Old Hickory and Lige took their departure as silently and as mysteriously as they had appeared, presumably to their mountain homes.

When the regular night operator returned, at the end of a week or ten days, there was nothing more for me to do, so I was furnished with transportation to Meridian, Mississippi, where I made the acquaintance of the other railroads comprising the Queen and Crescent Route.

Fruit Specials on N. O. and N.

The New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad was one of the best-paying pieces of track of its length in the country. The fruit business, which it handled by means of fast special-scheduled trains, which had the right-of-way over most passenger-trains, was a constant source of wonder to the Northern transportation man, and brought large revenue to the road.

There was not a share of the stock to be obtained, and it was not quoted on any stock exchange that I know of. It was an old road, dating back about as far as the Cincinnati Southern. The first president and general manager was Mr. W. H. Harvey, who was also the principal stockholder This road, together with the Alabama and Vicksburg and the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific were at that time known as the "Harvey Roads" and were what might be called a close corporation.

The three roads operated under three different charters. The N. O. and N. E. and the V., S. and P. worked under charters granted by the State of Louisiana, while

the A. and V. obtained its corporate existence from the State of Mississippi. They were, of course, really three divisions of one road, with the same executive heads.

The first division superintendent of whom I had personal knowledge was Mr. D. D. Curran, who later became the chairman of the boards of directors of these three companies. Who was before him, if any one, and who succeeded him after he was made general manager, I do not know.

Alexander J. Smith was the chief train despatcher and Thomas Russell was the first-trick despatcher, with Harry Smith and George Holliday working second and third respectively.

Home Guards Run Road.

This road produced a number of very fine railroad men — men who have made their marks in the transportation world. But most of the employees preferred to remain at home, where they knew everybody and everybody knew them.

Why, there were agents and telegraphers on the line of the three railroads who had been at the one station all of their lives, and who had refused promotion after promotion on the ground that they were at home —the place where they were born—and that they were perfectly satisfied and did not care to risk a change. They had never worked elsewhere and seldom went anywhere except, perhaps, once a year to New Orleans to see the Mardi Gras.

But they were satisfied, and they were happy. What more can be desired in this life? Each one of them owned his own little home, and a small piece of land on which he raised his own garden "truck" and chickens.

After holding the dual position of president and general manager for a number of years Mr. Harvey began to realize that the strain was too much for him, so he appointed Mr. Curran general manager, retaining the presidency. Mr. Curran was succeeded as division superintendent by Mr. Alex J. Smith. Mr. Smith, however, was in poor health, and died in the service, after serving as superintendent for only a few months.

Who his successor was I do not remember, but it was some one from the road. A position in any capacity, was a hard thing to obtain on any of the lines which comprised the Queen and Crescent System. They made their own men and they kept them; they treated them fairly and the men were loyal.

No one ever resigned, and it was very seldom that an employee was dismissed. The only way a vacancy occurred was by death—and longevity was a characteristic all along the line of the Queen and Crescent.

Mr. E. Ford was an "old head." Entering the service about 1880 as a telegrapher, he advanced to an important official position before the Southern took over the Queen and Crescent Route.

Upon the death of an old timer, Mr. Ford was promoted from an operator to an agency. From agent he went to Vicksburg as train despatcher, and when the position of trainmaster was created he filled the bill.

Then the superintendent died and Mr. Ford was his successor. Upon Mr. Harvey's death Mr. Curran was elected president, also retaining the title of general manager, and brought Mr. Ford to New Orleans as assistant-general manager, which position he retained under Mr. Larz Jones, Mr. Curran's successor, who has been in the service of the company since its organization. Everybody from Shreveport to New Orleans knew Mr. Ford, and they all called him "Eddie."

Old Times on A. and V.

Mr. W. V. Harvey, son of the first president of the roads, was an office-boy in his father's employ. He finally achieved the position of superintendent of the Alabama and Vicksburg, at Vicksburg. He worked his way up like any ordinary young man, without regard to his father's position, although it was generally understood that he possessed more stock in the railroads formerly controlled by his father than any other individual.

At Vicksburg, at the time of which I write, besides Mr. Ford, were despatchers "Billy" Woods, afterward general superintendent of the Plant System in Florida,

who died in harness there, "Tom" Coppage, who had been transferred from the C., N. O. and T. P. at Somerset, and Mr W. H. Hearn, now division superintendent of the V., S. and P. at Shreveport.

Lost Link of Q. and C. Route.

The Alabama Great Southern was the last link, although the center one, of the Q. and C. Route to be built. Begun about 1876 merely as a coal road from and to the coal mines in central Alabama, to furnish the comparatively new and thriving iron- and steel city of Birmingham with coal for its blast furnaces, it gradually extended its lines to the North and the West, until within a few miles of Chattanooga and Meridian.

Mr. Harvey, of the New Orleans and Northeastern, was quick to realize the possibilities of the line and, after some correspondence with the executives of the C., N. O. and T. P. and the new A. G. S., made an offer to the latter company that he, Harvey, would complete the A. G. S. into Meridian and Chattanooga. The officials of the latter company, however, were wise, and declined this offer, and built the few miles themselves. Ten days after the completion of this road the first through trains on what was later to be known as the Queen and Crescent Route was run, one train leaving New Orleans at six o'clock in the morning, running through to Cincinnati, and her sister train leaving the latter city at the same time for the Southern metropolis. Then a strong, aggressive traffic arrangement was drawn up and signed by all three companies interested.

Big Day Along Line.

The opening of the route was a gala day all along the line. The citizens gathered on the station platforms *en masse*, and cheered wildly as the Queen and Crescent express trains passed through, or stopped to take on or to let off passengers.

At division points, such as Somerset, Chattanooga, Birmingham and Meridian, brass bands were waiting and speeches were made by prominent citizens. All of these demonstrations, of course, took time, and, in consequence, both trains pulled into their terminals some hours late

Of course this, under the circumstances, was excusable, but after that it was the aim of the management, or the managements, of the Queen and Crescent Route to have their trains promptly on time, and it was rare indeed that one of them is behind its schedule.

The first superintendent of the Alabama Great Southern was a Mr. Hollaran. There was no trainmaster. The chief train despatcher was "Doc" Squires, who dropped dead from heart disease in the office of the Postal Telegraph Company, in Birmingham, some fifteen years ago, after serving the A. G. S. faithfully for many years. John Grimm, sometime superintendent of the Florida Railway and Navigation Company, now a part of the Atlantic Coast Line, was the first-trick despatcher; Arthur Pugh, deceased, was second-trick man, and George Terry held down the chair on the third trick.

All of these gentlemen were well known in their day among railroad men throughout the country, but are now forgotten except by the few remaining real old-timers who worked with them in the early days, who delight to foregather in the conductors' room at the division points and exchange reminiscences and tell the younger generation how they used to do it years ago. They will tell you:

"We used to railroad, in the good old days, when the Queen and Crescent was new; when there were no air-brakes and every man was as good as another and sometimes better, and each and every one of us stood upon his own personality and merits, sah."

Oh! Them was the happy days!

RED FALLS FOR THE STRONG WOMAN.

BY WILLIAM H. SEYMOUR.

'Pears Like the Auburn Lemonade Pedler Just Can't Lay Off the Love Gyp for Long.

FTER th' snake-charmer puts th' rollers under Red an' his dream of love is all shot to pieces, he's like a guy what bet th' family jools on th' wrong horse. He rambles round th' circus lot with an undertaker's look in his glims, an' on th' train he stays by hisself all th' time jest like he was a stepchild or a Chinee.

Red don't even talk ta me fer a coupla weeks till one night we meets in th' big top. Th' sawdust spreader was levelin' off th' breakfast food in th' center ring, gettin' readied up fer th' night show.

Red oozes through th' red curtains at th' dressin'-room entrance, an' he drifts over ta where I'm squattin' on th' box in which th' Mex knife-thrower keeps his "shinin' implements of death," like it says on th' bill.

Red grabs out a seat for hisself beside me, takes a coupla drags at his free-burnin' stogy, slants at th' snipe an' then opens with this one.

"Slim," he says, "take it from me, these cigars smells like some one was shoein' a horse."

I'm hep that th' cigar is okay, an' that th' trouble is with my auburn-haired pardner, so I asts him:

"How da ya like th' cookhouse grub lately?"

"It's cruel," he tells me; "tastes like it was fried in sewer grease."

Now I'm *sure* I has th' low-down on Red's case, so I says:

"An' th' brew is all collar; th' grass ain't so green like it useta be, an' th' robin sings like a guy filin' a saw. In other words, th' world is all dutched up. What?"

"You said it!" Red tells me. "Ya must 've leave some Jane make a sucker outa ya, an' then give ya th' gate like Pauline give me," he says.

"I didn't even get th' gate," I tells him. "She wasn't white enough ta tell me. She jest gives me th' double X an' sells out to a guy with a flivver. Dames like that is born fer ta make two guys miserable—th' sucker what they crossed an' th' boob they married!"

"I guess you're right, Slim," he tells me. "If a Jane can't play straight with one guy, she's liable ta toss th' next boob. Pauline sure quit me cold. Left me with nothin' but th' sweat on my forehead an' th' rubber-band what I useta restrain th' bankroll with."

"You ain't got nothin' on me," I says. "Listen!" I says. "Old man experience is chirpin' now. When I gets crossed by that queen of mine I wakes up with th' same feelin' that ya have when ya wake up th' afternoon after th' night before: you're broke, your tongue is coated like th' bottom of th' parrot cage, an' they is a faint smell of colonery around ya jest ta remind ya that they're *must* have been a Jane in th' party th' night before."

Red laffs fer th' first time since Pauline gated him.

"You must 've played th' game pretty strong," he tells me.

"I went fer th' entire works," I says; then, to cheer him up, I says some poetry. "It's better ta have loved an' lost than to have never loved at all," I tells him. "Promote a new bankroll, Red," I says, "an' maybe a better queen will 'cross your path' like the fortune-teller says."

Well, they is many's a true word spoken from th' chest, an' it ain't more than a couple of days before Aimée th' Amazon crosses Red's path. Red didn't seem ta be very enthusiastic, but that don't make no never mind to Aimée, because she's one of them Janes what gets what she wants or they is a jam.

Aimée ain't no frail one, either. She does a strong woman act in the kid show comes out in tights an' sandals with a tiger hide twisted round her waist. She's six feet an' a coupla inches in her bare piggies, an' she gives th' hay-scales a rumble at two-ten in her summer furs. When she works her act she juggles a barrel of water, five hundred-pound dumb-bells, an' other bricky-brack like that.

Red gets a swelled skull when any Janes leave him carry their suit-case from th' sleeper down ta th' dressing-tent, even if he don't like the Jane very much. When Aimée leaves him play porter, old-boy Red has hat trouble. The old boiler sets on his dome like a thimble fits a billiard-ball.

"How da ya like my lady fr'en'?" he asts th' gang one day after supper when we are roostin' on th' ring-bank watchin' th' Boss Canvas splice a guy-rope. Right away we starts ta give Aimée a frying.

"She reminds me of th' city horse in th' 'Black Crook,'" I says. "Th' big one what wore white tights an' a sword an' walked down th' stage after all th' other Janes was on. They is too much of her," I says.

"She's gotta hand like a buncha bananas," says th' Wild Man.

"An' a arm like th' village blacksmith," says th' Human Ostrich

"She's gotta chest like Tom Sharkey," says th' Chief Clown, "only," he says, "they ain't no pitcher of a ship on it."

Red gets so hot that th' gravy spots on his vest begins ta sizzle.

"Yous guys is all sore," he says, "because she's got better muskels than what you have. Why," he raves on, "just fer fun she picks me up by th' belt this mornin' an' holds me, one hand above her head!"

"That was 'jest fer fun,'" I says. "But s'pose she was peeved. Lean away from that Jane," I says; "she's liable ta take a notion an' marry ya. S'posin' she did, an' ya drifted home to th' bungaloo about 2 A.M., sufferin' from an overdose of gasoline, they'd be a argament like they always is when a married guy comes home from th' Dutchman's like that. Can ya pitcher what Aimée would do? Why, she'd throw a cook-stove at ya. Or, if she was real peevish, maybe she'd pull up a radiator by th' roots an' slap ya on th' lip with it."

"No Jane ever lived what could wallop me an' get away with it," says Red.

"Them big ones is bad medicine," I says. "Play it safe an' grab a small one. When they gets noisy ya kin put yer arms around them an' promise ta take them to th' movies.

"Ya kin promise a small Jane anythin' an' ya don't have ta kept it. What's a promise between man an' wife, anyways? She knows ya won't keep it unless she's a Jane like Aimée.

"If ya ever promise Aimée anythin', ya will have ta keep it or th' undertaker will fold yer arms fer ya an' put ya ta bed with a shovel!"

"Slim has th' right dope," says th' Ostrich; "lean away from that strong-arm queen. She looks mean enough ta give ya a blue eye on a meatless Tuesday so's ya couldn't get no raw beef ta keep it from swelling."

Then th' Wild Man spills this one:

"She looks like she'd be one of them wifes what buy their husband a razor an' a kid's bank fer a weddin' present. Then she makes ya shave yerself an' drop a thin, hard dime in th' strong-box after every scrape. Meantime," says th' Wild Citizen, "she opens condensed milk an' sardines with th' razor. That's what made me wild."

"She'd make ya wear last year's derby all th' time," says th' Clown, "an' when th' ole boiler turned green she'd blacken it up fer ya with stove-polish. Take it from me, I know; my second wife was like that."

Red don't tarry ta hear no more about wedded bliss an' Aimée. Poetic'lly speakin', he puts his cue in th' rack an' oozes outa under th' side-wall inter th' deepin' dusk, sore as a mashed finger.

But them was true words what I spoke about Aimée havin' a yen fer th' weddin'-bells an' th' rice, with Red fer an accomplice, as th' judge calls it. I gets hep that she is building him fer th' bells when I glims somethin' like a mangy tooth-brush under his beak.

"What's th' big idear?" I asts him. "How long have ya been promoting th' Chaplin?"

"My fr'en' says a mustache makes a guy look manly," is what he tells me.

Then she gets th' idear that Red is on th' road ta ruin, with all brakes off, jest because he likes th' foamy stuff on a hot day. She makes him lay off th' amber brew, an' she won't even leave him dip his beak in th' cider they sells in th' hick barber-shops.

"Red," I says, "give that Jane a tin-shower before she rushes ya inta th' J. P.'s office without givin' ya time ta wipe yer sandals on th' 'Welcome' mat before th' fatal words is said."

"I'd like ta gate her, Slim," he says, "but she says if I trifle with her girlish confections she'll shoot me like a dog what I would be if I left her at th' church."

"Leave her shoot," I says, "she couldn't hit ya. Annie Oakley is th' only female-woman what could ever hit what she aimed fer. Th' rest of th' frail sects couldn't hit th' floor if they fell outa bed."

"But," I says, "even if she did croak ya, she's so big an' homely that th' jury wouldn't leave her go. It takes a little dame with a baby-stare to spring th' jury after she's filled a guy full of blue beans."

"I ain't takin' no chances on any Jane what is mad an' has a smoke-wagon pointed over my way," Red tells me. "I'm jest goin' ta stall along, an' hope that Aimée sees some other guy she likes, even if he ain't so good-lookin' as what I am."

When old-boy Red makes that bust about him bein' good-lookin', I jest natcherly give th' old raz, because it reminds me of a meller-dramer, where th' farmer's daughter looks at us guys in th' gallery an' asts us: "Coises! Why am I so beautiful?" when th' villain says he'll foreclose on th' ole homestead if she don't marry him.

Red don't get no symperthy from me, an' when I puts th' bunch hep about Red bein' sorry 'cause he was so handsome, they gives him a *good* time, an' every one starts whistlin' "They Go Wild, Simply Wild, Over Me."

Me an' Red don't speak after that, but th' Circassian Lady ain't tongue-tied, an' she puts me hep ta all th' secrets what Aimée tells her. That's how I gets wise that Red has swore off of chewin'. It must 've been tough on Red, because he always has a quid as big as a cabbage in his cheek.

An' it seems he's swore off th' smokes, too. How I gets wise about th' smokes is like this: One day I fergets that me an' him ain't speakin', an' I asts him fer a match.

"I ain't got no matches; I ain't smokin' no more," he tells me.

"Red," I says, "you're an awful sucker ta leave a Jane like Aimée reform ya."

Then th' big stiff lies ta me an' tells me he cut terbacker because it puts a guy's high-jean on th' blink. What gets me sore is when he recites some potery what goes like this:

> "Terbacker is a filthy weed
> It was th' devil sowed th' seed
> It drains yer pockets, scents yer clothes,
> An' makes a chimbly of yer nose"

Right there is where I starts ta make a chimbly outa Red's beak. Him standin' there, perfec'ly sober, an' pullin' that sawdust trail stuff on me! I unbuckles a swing that would of lifted Red outa his moccasins, but it don't connect because Aimée th' Amazon comes ta th' rescue and jumps between me an' Red.

She puts up her mitts an' tells me ta come on, if I'm anxious fer a battle. Of course th' gang is all there, an' they gives me th' old raz an' laffs their heads off. But I'm enough of a gentleman ta know that it ain't good ettiket ta slam a Jane when they is a crowd around; ya got ta wait till ya get her alone.

I lets Aimée get away with it, an' I don't say nothin' ta her, but Red does. He must 've felt like when ya was a kid an' yer big sister butted in an' stopped a private fight between you an' th' kid across th' street.

Aimée stands like she was dumb when Red starts ta bawl her. She thought she done him a favor, but they is some things a Jane can't never understand, or she'd never try ta fight a guy's battles, even if he was a cripple.

Of course Aimée gets sore like a boil about Red's "ingratertude," an' she comes back at him strong as horse-radish. Th' last thing she says before she swang on his jaw was that she was through with him forever.

When Red hears that he's free again, he takes th' count with a happy smile on his mush, even though she slams him so hard that his shirt rolls up his back like a window-shade with a busted spring.

A while later I drifts inta th' only "Tonsorial Emporium" in th' yap-burg where we're showin'. Red is there after gettin' a shave, haircut, shampoo, massage, an' a few more frivolities to restore his, now—equilibrium. Savvy-fair he called it, but I'm no Bolsheviker, so equil. is good enough for me. Th' Chaplin is missin': he's got a chew in his cheek, a stogy in one fist an' a quart of cider in th' other.

"Slim," he says, after we punishes th' second quart, ta show they ain't no hard feelings, "I may leave a Jane make a sucker outa me lots a ways. An' I'll fight *for* them an' I'll fight *with* them, but I draws th' line when they want to fight fer me."

"You're feelin' pretty cheerful fer a guy what has jest been gated by his lady fr'en'," I tells him.

"Well," he says, "I am sure joyous because Aimée slipped me my passports. Remember that potery you told me when me an' Pauline split out?"

"Better to have loved an' lost than to have never loved at all?" I says.

"That dope is all wrong, Slim," he tells me; "all wrong. It oughta go like this: 'Better to have loved an' *lost* than to have never loved an' *won*.' I never fell fer Aimée; she jest wished herself on me."

An' w'ile me an' Red is laffin' the barber rolls in another keg.

JUST AS USUAL!

I TOOK my skates from off the shelf,
Unfit for use those skates I found,
And thus I muttered to myself,
"I think I'd better have them ground."
I sent them to the shop straightway—
A shop which every skater knows—
And steadily, by night and day,
It froze!

The grinder ground, the time passed by,
At last those skates returned to me.
"Now for enjoyment!" was my cry;
"To-morrow on the ice I'll be."
To-morrow came, and then, of course,
I saw that drizzle was abroad—
Without a vestige of remorse,
It thawed!

WHO DARES?

BY LORING BRENT,

Author of "Peter the Brazen," "The Black-Sander," etc.

A SIX-PART STORY—PART TWO.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

WHEN Jimmy Webb, mining engineer and adventurer, just back from South America, and dead broke, except for a nickel, landed in New York, a fellow passenger, a pretty girl asked him to carry her bags to her taxi, and insisted that he ride with her to the Hotel Van Stettin. She told him that she knew who he was, and knew of the violent death of his father, Duncan Webb, and hinted that his death had in some way placed her under obligation to Jimmy. She said she wanted to help him, and gave him the address of the Argonaut Gold Mining Corporation, advising to apply to them for a position. She warned him, however, that he would be in danger.

At the hotel she met a black bearded man, whom Jimmy believed to be Blackthorne, whom he suspected of the murder of his father, and who had recently escaped from Leavenworth Prison. He phoned his mother, still a widow,—that he expected to secure a position with the Argonaut. This seemed to excite her, and she told him that he must not accept the place till he had talked with her, and begged him to come to her at once.

When Jimmy reached her apartment she was gone, but had left a note and four hundred dollars for him. In the note she said that everything was all right, that he was to accept the position with the Argonaut, and that she had gone on an indefinite visit.

Jimmy was suspicious, especially after he discovered that his favorite suit was gone and his shaving things had been used so recently that the shaving brush was still damp. In the washbowl he found the stubble of a black beard.

His friend, Oliver Menasco, of the secret service, whom he had met as he was leaving the hotel, phoned him that he knew of Mrs. Webb's disappearance. She had been taken away in a car which had crossed the river to New Jersey. A little later the girl of the taxi phoned Jimmy that his mother was with her, and safe. She advised him, in applying for the position, to use the name of Henry Morgan, a mining expert who had died in the Klondike a year previously. On the way to the Argonaut offices Jimmy read in a mining journal a technical article by Morgan, to prepare himself for the coming interview. The journal also contained the company's advertisement for a mining engineer, printed under the challenging caption: "Who Dares?"

VIII.

WITH the round, black hat bobbing up and down a dozen steps behind him, Jimmy entered the subway at Times Square, still repeating to himself that catchy phrase, "Hard work! Hard fighting! Good food and lodging!"

He eyed the date — April 12 — doubtfully. Like many other people, Jimmy was a bad hand at remembering the day of the month. He knew it was April.

He knew it should be somewhere along about the middle of the month. Then he resorted to the familiar practise of trying to give the day its date by reflecting upon a remembered one, not too far distant.

He had sailed from Lima, Peru, on February 9. That was the last date he clearly recalled. At the subway newsstand he bought a morning paper, discovered that the weather was scheduled to be fair and warmer, and that the date, lo and behold—was April 12!

Jimmy, with a notch between his eyes, concentrated upon the findings of one Henry Morgan, now a frozen corpse in the bed of the Yukon River.

Before he had finished the first paragraph of the technical essay he discovered that Henry Morgan was a man after his own heart. He knew his subject thoroughly, and he felt guilty, small, and mean, when he realized that he was about to impersonate a man who had promised to be such a sterling scholar.

Why had he, James Webb, no such favorable record to point to? He certainly knew placer mining as well as had this Morgan fellow, and he hastily excused himself by confessing that writing was one of the arts that God had never intended him to master.

It was ten o'clock when Jimmy came out of the subway kiosk at Wall Street. He had one hour to kill, so, acting upon an earlier impulse, he entered a very fashionable ready-made clothing-shop, and asked to look over corduroy hunting-suits

In his present garb he realized that he looked anything but a mining engineer, and while appearances might count for little with the brusk Mr. Radcliff, on the other hand they might count for a great deal.

The shop had exactly what he specified —in any size. Its custom included many of the greatest wild-game hunters in the Wall Street region.

Jimmy slipped into a brown-corduroy suit which was striking but not alarming. It was handsome, rather indifferent as to period, and it fairly breathed the outdoors —wild autumn woods, spanking breezes from chilled lakes—gun-fire. And it smacked of a hardy existence, which was precisely how Jimmy wanted it to smack.

To this costume he diffidently added a broad-brimmed brown hat. His boots were heavy and brown—they carried their burden.

Slouching carelessly to a tall, French mirror, he found that he looked wonderful. The only detail missing was a gold watch-chain.

Now Jimmy had enough money in his pocket to justify his purchase of a solid-gold watch and a solid-gold chain. Yet he did not desire a solid-gold watch nor a solid-gold chain. He wanted gold plate.

Five-Aces Sanderson had in his possession a heavy watch and chain, formerly Jimmy's, and neither of these was gold throughout. Yet there was sufficient gold in their coatings to have deceived with ease the experienced eye of the more proficient gambler.

Had the watch and chain been solid gold, so Jimmy's peculiar reasoning ran, he could not have staked it for more money than he had staked it for anyway. So where was the advantage of a solid-gold watch and chain?

From this emporium he emerged, modestly exhibiting across his brown-corduroy vest golden links most heavily wrought. They had a face value of two hundred dollars, and an intrinsic value of twenty.

He glanced at his new timepiece. The handsome face advised him that the hour was ten fifty-five. Four minutes later he stood before the stone-arched portico of the Blakeworth Building.

Judged only by office furnishings, it is exceedingly difficult to decide whether a gold-mining company is a well-intentioned concern or a group of individuals who would steal the shirt off your back if you gave them half a chance.

Rich mahogany furniture equally hides goat-motives or sheep-motives.

Is it a wildcat? you ask; or is it a tame and earnest organization which will scratch gold in large raw chunks into your bank account?

The problem presented in that light by the office furnishings of the Argonaut Gold Mining Corporation annoyed Jimmy Webb when he entered.

Rich green carpet at least half an inch in thickness covered the floor entirely. Reposing solidly upon this were ripe mahogany chairs with expensive black-leather bottoms and glass feet.

Stretched privately across one end of the reception-room was a formidable but handsome mahogany rail about waist high, with thick bars of the same tropical wood supporting it from a brother rail laid flat upon the floor.

Behind it was a telephone switchboard of mahogany, while gracing this mechanism was a pale but beautiful blonde, with eyes reminiscent of the sea on a moody day, with a mouth reminiscent of an uncertain red-rose petal which did not know whether to flutter or lie still.

And beyond her from a pretentious array of typewriters arose a most imposing clatter. The place vibrated with the air of a fast and solidly moving business organization.

There was a mahogany time-clock near

the telephone switchboard, which contained a countless array of nickeled levers.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this business bee-hive, however, was an epidemic of brisk and solemn office boys. Jimmy knew that office-boys never stooped to briskness and solemnness unless a positive, an electric, a straightforward boss kindled them.

He knew that office-boys were prize time-killers, and the knowledge that these youngsters were not killing time gave him his first inkling that the Argonaut people might be on the level.

The most diverting feature of the Argonaut waiting-room, however, he found in the score or more of men who were warming the mahogany chairs. These he took to be applicants for the position which he had come to get in the face of any and all opposition.

He looked them over dispassionately, severely, weighing them in the channels of his mind as so many opponents to be downed in an exceedingly swift battle.

According to guesswork they ranged all the way from nineteen to sixty. The older ones, he hazarded, might be government assayers, the younger ones, fresh graduated from the mining schools with the green still upon them.

Jimmy dismissed them from his mind and walked over to the wall which displayed one of the most amazing enlarged photographs he had ever witnessed.

It showed a Fairbanks scale, with the balance lever weighted down with at least fifteen thick weight-disks. The sliding weight was away out to the end. Upon the platform reposed a rough, irregular mass of metal with sunshine upon it.

Underneath the platform, printed on the photograph, was this label:

BABY MOGUL NUGGET
Taken from Nevada No. 3 Shaft
Actual weight, before melting
763 pounds

"Holy mackerel!" breathed Jimmy. "Some nugget!"

The mere sight of it gave him an itching sensation along the roots of his fingers. Then he heard a brisk executive voice raised in commanding inquiry.

"Will those gentlemen who are waiting to see Mr. Radcliff in reference to the *Metallurgical Journal* advertisement please step this way?"

Every man in the waiting-room, with the exception of three or four, arose obediently.

A gate, heretofore a secret unto itself, opened in the mahogany rail near the telephone switchboard, and the applicants trooped in, making no other sounds than a faint rustling as their shoes moved along the thick, green carpet.

Jimmy was one of the last to enter. The pale but beautiful blonde at the switchboard glanced daringly up at him as he passed, attracted, perhaps, by the careless corduroy suit.

Her moody blue eyes rested upon Jimmy's snapping brown ones, and a pert little smile adorned for an instant those rosebud lips.

Jimmy, moving slowly by, smiled engagingly.

"Say," she whispered earnestly, "I hope *you* get it!"

"I'll buy you an ermine coat if I do!" he retorted gaily.

She had to turn her head to reply.

"You won't have much competition!"

In afterthought:

"Aren't they a funny looking bunch? Gee!"

And she stuck out her tongue in behalf of the purple-nosed gentlemen behind Jimmy who glared at her reprovingly.

Jimmy found himself in another spacious mahogany-and-green reception-room with several frosted-glass-paneled doors opening from it. Various names appeared upon these, but the one now open was blank. Mr. Radcliff's sanctum, perhaps

A small, colorless man of middle age, whose graying head supported a moonlike bald spot, slightly off center, stood in the open doorway, his beady blue eyes flitting from face to face in a fixed glance of shrewd appraisal.

For an instant that sharp glance rested upon Jimmy's sunburnt physiognomy, weighing, estimating, concluding, all in a

flash, then flicked to the next, the purple-beaked gentleman.

"Please be seated," he requested briskly. "I will repeat my former inquiry: You are all come in answer to my advertisement in the *Metallurgical Journal?*"

There was a chorus of yeses and no dissensions.

Jimmy found that the beady glance was again resting upon his countenance. He returned it with frank, critical interest. For a moment there was a duel of eyes, then both searched the other's face swiftly for gleanings of character.

Mr. Radcliff, for this was he, withdrew his gaze entirely finally, and lifted his voice.

"Gentlemen," he began briskly, "as I endeavored to express very clearly in our advertisement, the man we require for the position of assayer at our Gold River mine must be a man of stamina, prepared to undergo hardships, to face perils and dangers unafraid. Let me sketch briefly what Gold River now is like.

"Some of you, perhaps, have been old time prospectors. Perhaps you recall the Gold River of the gold rush days, when men gambled their fortunes away in an evening, when law was made by hand and blue steel, when the rope played a far more important part in local legislation in the West than it does to-day.

"What remains of Goldville is an array of empty cabins, deserted stores, saloons thick with the dust of that bygone day. Do not expect, the one who is successful, to enter a modern, electrically lighted city.

"Civilization is not there. A corps of hardened miners have been despatched there — grim men, fighters — who don't bother to polish their shoes very often. The few natives of the locality are for the most part desperate characters. Gun-play may be expected."

Jimmy observed at this point a notable shrinking on the part of the whiter-faced applicants.

"Remember, we do not assume responsibility for your life. Gold River is wide open. Prospectors are flocking there—and some of you know what kind of men they are.

"Perils which would blanch a normal man will be your daily lot. The salary attached to that position is high, because of these dangers.

"Frankly, I don't expect to see the man who goes out there come back alive! That is my estimate of Gold River! All of that was indicated in my advertisement. Well, I'm ready to consider you now," he wound up dramatically.

"Who dares?"

"I do!" barked Jimmy, springing up from the chair.

A half dozen followed his example, but the others sat in their chairs, pondering, with rather stupid expressions in their faces.

"I do! I do!" came a number of voices.

"The others may go," said Mr. Radcliff unceremoniously. "The men who are standing may remain. You — I will see first."

The one he referred to was Jimmy Webb.

A pressure upon his left shoulder—the quiet shutting of a door—the squeak of a swivel chair—and Jimmy was face to face with the brisk and scrutinizing Mr. Radcliff.

They were tête-à-tête, with knees almost touching under the white daylight which came in through a spotless plate window. Mahogany and green comprised the color scheme here also.

"What is your name?"

"Henry Morgan," answered Jimmy.

His host mouthed the name two or three times, studying him keenly.

"Ah! I had hoped you were Mr. Morgan. You have been—recommended."

"By whom?" asked Jimmy softly.

Mr. Radcliff ignored the question.

"Where are you from?"

"Alaska the Yukon."

"Assaying experience?"

"A year of it—up there, backed by college training."

Mr. Radcliff was making notes on a small, yellow pad. He looked impatient.

"Government or private?"

"Government survey."

"I see." Mr. Radcliff nodded as if he had seen nothing. "In my advertisement I mentioned strong references—strong references."

Jimmy braced himself.

"Are you prepared to give me such references—aside from the—other one?"

"It depends," said Jimmy. "For this job, doesn't honesty count for more than anything else?"

"Precisely!"

"Well, can't you tell by looking in my face whether I am honest or not?"

"A moment ago," said Mr. Radcliff instantly, "I was quite sure I saw a lie in your face!"

Jimmy did not waver.

"Embarrassment," he explained with a faint grin. "I don't often sit in the office of a man who mines seven-hundred-and-eighty-pound nuggets in a prospect that was milked dry twenty years ago!"

Whatever effect Jimmy deliberately had set out to create in the shrewd Mr. Radcliff would be hard to say. What happened was that the amazing retort shocked the gentleman to such an extent that he was completely diverted, with the question of references, for the time being, side-tracked.

The Argonaut general manager launched out on an explanation which, according to the very fluent way it was delivered, gave it the flavor of many rehearsals.

"The three shafts of the present Gold River mines," explained Mr. Radcliff with some heat, "have been inoperative since the Nevada rush. The original owner died in a saloon brawl, and since that time the heirs have fought in court for the possession.

"During the legal proceedings, no attempt could be made to work the property. No gold was taken out. In fact, no one knew how rich that property was until I, with engineers, investigated.

"In our prospectus, issued to our few clients, we pointed out these facts. The gold has been there all the while—masses of it—pure shot gold! Millions and millions of it!

"Any one who cares to review the proceedings," he added irritably, "can find the full court evidence filed in the State House at Carson City; also our charter, issued under the laws of Nevada. No one realized until the mines were reopened how inestimably rich they were."

"Supposing I should want to buy some stock later on?" said Jimmy.

"Not a cent's worth of stock for sale!" snapped Mr. Radcliff.

He sank back in his chair, and there were white lines about his mouth

"I hope, as employers, we would satisfy you," he added sarcastically.

"To show you that I know my business," replied Jimmy, "I picked up on my way down-town a review on the placer situation in certain parts of Alaska, published by me in the 'Proceedings of the American Society of Metallurgical Engineers,' last fall. I will leave the paper with you, if you care to look it over."

Mr. Radcliff leaned forward and glanced down the page. He had no intention, apparently, of taking it from Jimmy's hand.

"Looks all right," he said crisply. "I thought, when I first saw you, that you might be the man. You look like a fighter. You look as if you knew enough to keep your mouth shut.

"What I want, Mr. Morgan, is a man whom I can trust. My informant says I can trust you, and your appearance leads me to believe that you are such a man."

In a confidential tone he added:

"What I must have is a personal representative, a man whom I can trust implicitly. One assayer is already in Gold River. But he was chosen by another member of this company."

Without a doubt there was avarice shining in Mr. Radcliff's blue eyes.

"I see," said Jimmy. "Checking and scout work."

"Exactly!" agreed Mr. Radcliff, bringing his thin hand down with an astonishing amount of noise on his left knee. "Checking and scout work.

"I want your personal assay upon every car-load of ore brought up from the three shafts; I want you to check personally every bar of gold which is melted, and to render me a weekly audit—secretly.

"Above all things—this must be done secretly You are to rely strictly upon your own resources. Nominally, you are going to Gold River as assistant to Thorndike.

"Do what he tells you. But keep your eyes open, and keep your mouth shut.

"If you get into trouble, you will have to get yourself out. If you're beaten to a pulp some night for no apparent reason, don't ask me to explain why. I don't know why! That's what happened to the last one," he added, his face paling slightly.

"He died?" questioned Jimmy softly.

"That is what happened to him," replied Radcliff with equal softness.

Jimmy puckered his lips in a silent whistle.

The mysterious general manager of Argonaut suddenly snapped his fingers.

"Dare you?" he barked.

"When do I start?"

"To-morrow morning, if you can be ready." Radcliff arose and held out his hand.

"To men of your type, I know what this means."

The pale hand continued to advance. Jimmy accepted the oath in a warm grip.

"Now," said Mr. Radcliff, pressing downward slightly, "tell me what the lie was."

Jimmy hesitated. Despite a faint dislike which had sprung up in him toward this man, he was still disgusted with himself for stooping to the subterfuge hiding behind the respectability and the ability of a dead man.

"Perhaps," hinted Mr. Radcliff warily, "perhaps you left Alaska for reasons that you don't care to mention. Was that it?"

"That's the truth," agreed Jimmy earnestly.

And it was the truth. In Alaska he had made the mistake not uncommon with him, of trusting a man too implicitly.

"Well, that point really is trivial—" began the other, and suddenly paused with his mouth open, his eyes inclined upward and leftward, his head dipped slightly in an attitude of curious listening.

A voice, lifted in cold anger, filtered through the door which connected with the adjoining private office.

Jimmy felt his teeth locking, his heart quickening. His nerves, too, had jumped at the sound.

Years before he had listened to that iron voice, raised as now in cold anger, merciless, domineering!

Radcliff, with a gasp, sank down in his desk chair, and was passing fingers over a white, damp forehead.

Jimmy sprang to the door and twisted the handle. The door was locked

"Who is in there?" he whispered.

"God knows," muttered Radcliff, still trembling. "Do you know?" he added.

Jimmy shook his head.

"No. No. But what a voice!"

Mr. Radcliff was no longer the brisk, self-confident employer. He looked as if some one had slapped him so vigorously upon the back that the wind had been driven out of him.

"It is terrible," he groaned; "terrible!"

IX.

THROUGH a sort of cloud, Jimmy heard the confirmation, uttered in a low voice, that he had been hired as assistant to Hubert Thorndike, general superintendent of the Argonaut three-shaft workings. He was to leave for the West on the Twentieth Century Limited in the morning.

Indistinctly he remembered saying that he could understand the coding of any telegram that Mr. Radcliff might send him. Every third word carried the message. Yes, that was it every third word.

He was also aware, as he passed from the inner reception-room to the buzzing and clicking outer office, that the six unsuccessful applicants for the position were going into the hall by another door.

Glancing in his hand, he again assured himself that the slip therein called for one hundred dollars in cash to defray his expenses to Gold River

So far, excellent. The ordeal had gone off with a fair degree of smoothness, although the surprises of that interview had not been the surprises which he had anticipated

Having once glimpsed the Baby Mogul nugget, he was quite sure that the Argonaut Gold Mining Corporation of Nevada was a wildcat

He had been more astonished than he had seemed when Mr. Radcliff had informed him that no stock was for sale. No stock for sale in a gold-mining company only two months old!

It had been his experience that a gold-mining company sold slips of beautifully engraved paper and glittering promises to gullible widows and orphans for large sums of money; the same slips of paper in the end generally proving their value as excellent material for starting fires in the kitchen stove.

An honest gold-mining company, unless it was controlled by one of the Big Four, which Argonaut most certainly was not, was therefore a brand-new experience.

Working backward from effect to cause, Jimmy reluctantly came to the conclusion that, because Argonaut was not fraudulently clamoring to line the pockets of widows and orphans, the Baby Mogul was the genuine article

He was curious to study that amazing photograph further, so he hastened to receive real money from the cashier in exchange for the slip of paper with Mr. Radcliff's name attached.

As he started to pass out of the cunning mahogany gate a pair of interested blue eyes arrested him.

"Say, how about that ermine coat?"

Jimmy hesitated at the mahogany switchboard.

"I went over like a tent," he admitted modestly.

"If I'd been doing the hiring," she came back at him daringly, "one look would have been enough. Those funny-looking things would have been mooching just like that!"

"Are you with me?" breathed Jimmy, glancing furtively around him and leaning closer.

"You said something!"

"Tell me, then, bright eyes"—very confiding tones—"is this outfit on the level—honest?"

"Are you going to buy it?" she asked mockingly.

"I'm going to work for it. But they're Greek to me. They won't sell me a scrap of stock!"

"Me either," said the pale but beautiful blonde earnestly. "Listen—when us girls saw that photograph, we made a raid on the cashier. I says: 'Take out half my pay each week, and put it aside for stock.' And the cashier came right back: 'Nothing doing, deary,' she says."

"Who owns all the stock?"

"You can ask me."

Jimmy pondered this with a dark frown.

"Whose office is next door to Mr. Radcliff's? The one on the right, I mean."

"Why, that's Mr. Dow's, the vice-president."

"Who was talking with Mr Dow just now?"

She straightened back, and looked at Jimmy suspiciously.

"Say! Are you a detective?"

Her glance at that moment left Jimmy's face and rested upon some object which passed noiselessly behind him.

Aware that comment might be incited in the office by too persistent questioning, Jimmy decided to change the subject.

"I'm leaving for Gold River to-morrow morning," he announced, cheerfully.

And at that instant, precisely, the languid blue stare past his shoulder became stationary, as if the object which had attracted her might have stopped. Hastily and in some confusion she dropped her gaze then.

Jimmy heard the door click softly.

The pallid cheeks burned with surprising crimson, and an unwonted luster overcame the moodiness of those wide blue eyes.

"I think," she said in a half-whisper, "that the man with the red eyes who just went out the door is the one who was talking with the V. P.!"

The express elevator door was closing when Jimmy rushed out into the hall.

A tall, thin man in a soft gray hat had just entered. Jimmy saw his back and saw a mass of thick hair, as black as jet, standing out from underneath the gray hat as if it needed brushing.

He shouted.

The door clacked.

The elevator sank. Thin black cables running swiftly downward occupied the white shaft.

He pressed the "down" button and irritably eyed the dozen white globes for the flash of a green signal.

Two cars went up swiftly.

After a century or two, a green light

flashed, and Jimmy shortly was decanted by the swift-moving crowd out upon Broadway.

He looked up and down the street, but the man was nowhere to be seen.

Angrily, he started for the subway kiosk. He had only gone a half dozen paces when a small man with a very pink and very preoccupied face fell into step alongside him.

Jimmy thought for the moment that the maneuver was accidental, but the stranger was gently but surely urging him toward the inside of the sidewalk.

"Pardon me," he said, softly.

"Well?" Jimmy asked, sharply.

"Pray don't take offense," begged the pink-cheeked stranger in the same gentle voice, "but I think you are the man I was sent here to find. Are you"—he studied Jimmy's eyes a moment—"are you the one who was called last night by long distance telephone—by—by a friend?"

Jimmy was relieved.

"Aunt Ollie?"

It was the stranger's turn to be puzzled. "Perhaps you received more than one long-distance call." He hesitated.

"Ah," breathed Jimmy. "Perhaps I did!"

"I have been sent to inquire if you were successful in your visit in the Blakeworth Building. What message have you to give?"

"Tell her yes," said Jimmy, emphatically; "and that I am anxious to have her meet me without fail in the lobby of the Van Stettlin to-night at six. She will be perfectly safe. I guarantee that."

"She? Her? Safe?" muttered the pink-faced man, blankly. Then he smiled pleasantly. "Oh, yes! Sure! I'll tell her! She's in Newark now. You know, she expected to meet you there at six anyway."

"She did?"

"That was my understanding."

"This is the first I knew of it," said Jimmy, baffled and for some unknown reason immediately on the alert.

The man regarded him with equal suspicion.

"Say—are you or aren't you James Webb, the mining engineer?"

"We've made a mistake after all!" cried Jimmy. "My name, I wish to tell you, is Henry Morgan!"

Very much confused, the stranger backed away, turned and walked swiftly in the direction of the Battery.

X.

At a quarter to six Jimmy handed over his hat and coat to the girl who presided over the Van Stettlin's cloak-room and sauntered into the lobby to see what there was to see.

The usual dinner crowd was on hand. Beautifully gowned women with immaculately groomed escorts chatted in groups. Here and there a couple entered upon short but emphatic conversations—a husband and wife, one of whom was keeping the appointment late, so Jimmy guessed.

There was a sprinkling of foreigners, Central and South Americans predominating, swarthy of skin and very decisive of gesticulation.

Selecting a corner from which he could watch both entrances without being himself conspicuous, he studied the people coming and going. He was far more anxious for a glimpse of a red hat than of the old-young face of Oliver Menasco.

In his mental question-box was stored a lengthy list of very definite interrogations. Although her reassurances had quieted his anxieties a trifle, he was still worrying over the fate of his mother. He wanted that doubt to be settled.

If his mother was being put by the girl to any definite use in running Blackthorne to earth, in ferreting out this perplexing riddle, he might rest more easily.

But he wanted her to come and tell him that.

And he wanted her to tell him in detail what connection Blackthorne might have with the mysterious but apparently honest Argonaut Mining Corporation.

And as much as anything else, he desired to learn her name.

Was she, perhaps, a special emissary of the secret service, working along lines dissimilar but parallel to those which Oliver Menasco was pursuing?

At heart he hoped so. He was loath to think that this fascinating young woman

had anything in common with the Blackthorne gang.

But why, in the light of any of these explanations, had she twice mentioned an obligation to him? He could recall her now, and the eager look in her face as she told him:

"I am under a debt to you, a very great debt!"

What had she meant by that? He scratched his head. It was most important that he see her before going West.

And at this point he fell to wondering why that peculiar fellow Radcliff had been so keenly interested in having him start on such short notice.

What was happening in Gold River that demanded his instant presence? Had something unforeseen arisen?

Through his underconsciousness a spoken name began to drift. The syllables were oddly familiar.

A bell-boy was calling the name over and over again. Somewhere recently Jimmy had heard that name before.

"Mr. Morgan—Mr. Henry Morgan—Mr. Morgan—Mr. Henry Morgan!"

And it suddenly dawned upon him that Mr. Henry Morgan was himself.

"Here—boy!" he called.

Buttons came up grinning, with a nickeled tray. Under this lay a white envelope with his name neatly written in the center and the crest of the Hotel Van Stettlin in embossed gilt in the left upper corner.

He gave Buttons a dime, and took the envelope, shaping vague doubts. It was sealed

Retiring to the privacy of a pillar he ripped it open.

> So sorry you could not see my signals, but you persisted in looking away from me Midnight. Central Park obelisk; dressed differently than now Look for black limousine. THE GIRL IN THE RED HAT

"Holy mackerel!" said Jimmy in dismay.

Confound his stupidity! He had missed her again!

He tucked the letter reverently away in the inner pocket of his dinner jacket and at that moment a man moved to his side so quietly that he might have been a ghost or a shadow.

"Well, have you been trying to rob any more innocent hotels lately?"

Jimmy beheld a mop of startling yellow hair and a pair of amused gray eyes. Oliver Menasco stood there toying with his watch fob.

"What luck? Did you land the job?"

Jimmy nodded, and they moved toward the Etruscan room.

An excellent orchestra was tinkling away somewhere behind palms; the strains of an airy waltz floated to them.

"Didn't your scout report?"

"What scout?"

Menasco had stopped short.

"Why, the pink-faced chap who stopped me in front of the Blakeworth Building."

"Must be mistaken," said Menasco, with a frown. "I sent no one there."

Jimmy whistled softly.

"Then she did send him, after all!"

"Who, the dear little friend?"

Jimmy nodded, thinking very rapidly.

"She's a bad egg," said the secret-service man, darkly; "you mark my word."

"You never saw her," defended Jimmy, stoutly.

"My suspicions are that she's in the service, too. Such things do take place," admitted Menasco, doubtfully. "She may be higher up. Well, what's her latest?"

They sat down.

"My mother is with her."

"What!"

"I tried to reach you last night, but you used a public booth."

Menasco was greatly annoyed.

"Tell me all that happened last night—then I'm going to spring a surprise on you."

Jimmy related everything, from the wet shaving brush to the pink-faced man in the street.

Menasco digested all of this with frequent interruptions.

"So far," he summarized when Jimmy was through, "we're exactly as far up the stump as we were when it all started. Now, Jimmy; I'm going to give you a suggestion.

"According to my reckoning you can find out just as much, if the girl doesn't clear up everything when you see her to-

night, by going to Gold River as you can by sticking in New York—probably much more.

"But I think you are wrong on one point. You've been thinking and dreaming Blackthorne for the past twenty-four hours. Every black-haired man you see—is Blackthorne.

"That's only natural. I get that way myself when I've been on a case too long. On the last leg of a job I've often pinched twenty men in an hour, because I'm saturated with the description that partly fits all of them

"Our Carson City man has investigated the Argonaut Gold Mining Corporation. He says they're absolutely on the level -no stock-jobbing at all. Two months ago the mine was opened for the first time since the Nevada gold rush.

"The original owner went down only a few feet. Geological men did say that gold wouldn't be found there, but it was found, a pocket of it, and no one knows how deep it goes. It amounts almost to an outcropping—is that the correct technical term?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Well, we have satisfied ourselves that Argonaut is on the square. Our Carson City man verified substantially what Radcliff told you.

"When two parties agree so exactly we usually let the thing drop. However"—he tapped firmly on the table with the handle of his fork—"anything might happen.

"Personally I don't think Blackthorne was ever in your mother's apartment.

"Personally I don't think Blackthorne and your young lady in the red hat were talking in this hotel together last night.

"In the first place, Blackthorne would not dare come to so public a place. My honest opinion is that your pretty adventuress is playing a solo game.

"Probably she has designs of some sort on Argonaut, in which she hopes to use you as a pawn. Very probably that is why she is holding your mother.

"My opinion, further, is that she induced your mother away on some pretext, and is holding her as hostage, in order to strengthen her grasp upon you. Nothing in the world could prevent you from starting for Gold River to-morrow, now, could it, honestly?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy, doubtfully, "but—"

"But, anyway," Menasco took him up, "you were wrong, as I suspected all along, on Blackthorne."

"But I tell you, Ollie," protested Jimmy, indignantly, "that I saw him here—in the lobby with my own eyes."

Menasco grinned the sardonic grin of the man who throws the trump card on the table.

"You have most amazing eyes," he said, with a laugh. "We have positive, substantiated evidence, that Blackthorne could not have been in New York in the past forty hours—that means a clear way of at least twelve hours before you landed from the Panama steamer—simply because he has been all the while in New Orleans!

"At last report, he was headed east toward Florida, probably making for Cuba! Now, what do you think of that, Mr. Watson?"

"Marvelous!" said Jimmy, with sincerity.

"This morning, some time between midnight and daybreak, the chief let the cat out of the bag. You know, he met me—headed me off—in Philadelphia. My territory is mostly in the East, because I know the Eastern cities

"Much as I regret it, Blackthorne's case has been put into other hands. Since this New York fizzle—that you're really to blame for by setting us on our ears as you did with those flimsy clues—well, old Blackthorne passes out of my life.

"The men who worked on his case when he went to Leavenworth, six years ago, have been put back on, as was natural. They know him. They know his tricks.

"Mark my word, they'll bag him before to-morrow morning. Pick up any paper to-morrow, and you'll see his picture on the front page, with 'Noted Criminal Recaptured,' in big type underneath it.

"Every railroad station in Florida is watched. He hasn't a chance!"

"I'm properly humbled," said Jimmy, meekly. "I knew I was wrong about that hair, but, Ollie, will you now try and ex-

plain in that lucid fashion of yours—that airy, impregnable, *Sherlock Holmes* way of yours—why my mother wrote that note?"

Menasco wasn't disturbed in the least.

"Jimmy," he replied, kindly, "I do not intend to pry open any family closets, but let me tell you simply this. I looked up the Blackthorne case, studied it very thoroughly before I tackled it, when we, too, imagined that he might return to his old hunting grounds, in New York.

"In thumbing over seven hundred odd typewritten pages I came across several vague references to Duncan Webb. Duncan Webb was your father.

"From that report, however, I am positive that your father was not associated in any way with Blackthorne's doings."

"He certainly was not!" flared Jimmy, loyally, immediately indignant. His father's honor was one of the most precious things in the world to Jimmy.

"He was an engraver, one of the best in this whole country and straight as a dieline.

"Why, certainly he was!" agreed Menacso, uncomfortably. "But, Blackthorne, at the time when your father died in that attack of heart failure, was endeavoring to scrape his acquaintance. That's a fact, isn't it?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes; that is true."

"Since then," Menasco went on, firmly, "both you and your mother, because of your father's acquaintance with him, have —well, what is the word? — hated— loathed—the very mention of that criminal's name.

"Your mother, being a very sensitive woman, as I recall her, was very much upset when she read in the papers that Blackthorne had escaped from his cell in Leavenworth.

"Now, by a pure accident, your pretty little adventuress happened to hit upon some scheme to tackle Argonaut at the same time, approximately, that Blackthorne made his getaway. What her scheme is you'll have to find out for yourself

"So, according to my analysis, this is what happened: Your mother read that Blackthorne had escaped. A few days later a mysterious young woman attacked her in her apartment, perhaps at the point of a gun

"Because your lovely adventuress is not yet hardened enough, she did the purely feminine trick of permitting your mother to write you a note and leave you some money.

"Your mother, frightened out of her wits, naturally believes that the girl is Blackthorne's accomplice. Overwrought nerves is my explanation for that note.

"As for the black-beard stubs in the wash-basin question the man who comes every week to clean the windows in your apartment. Pin him down, and you'll find him confessing very probably that he has been using your safety razor, for months, perhaps, to save the price of shaves!

"Jimmy, I do hate to prick your little mystery bubble, but in my mind—and remember, I've been working with other men in the department on this case—my explanation justifies and accounts for everything you've told me. Your nerves are upset, Jimmy; that's the whole trouble!

"I imagine your girl will let the whole side of her affair drop down to-night when you see her. Why, Jimmy, she's a rank amateur! Midnight—the obelisk—black limousine—dress differently! Huh! All the earmarks of a lady *Raffles!*

"I'll bet you a dinner the next time we meet that she'll break down to-night and let you in on the deal. Whether she does or not, go on out to Nevada. It's a good job, anyway."

Jimmy sipped his ale with a most comfortable expression. He was delighted to have a friend with the keen, probing mentality of Oliver Menasco. If Ollie only hadn't shown such blundering workmanship in his pursuit of the criminal who put the lady skeleton on the psychology professor's front gate!

"I'm satisfied," he said, gratefully.

"Good! You and I can both forget Blackthorne. I'm on another job, a real job this time."

He paused and looked around him with the air of a man about to divest himself of a burning secret.

"I shouldn't tell you, Jimmy; but you're

a good scout, and you know how to keep your mouth shut. Did you ever hear of Dago Frank, the nitroglyserin wizard?

" Dago Frank and his gang have pulled off in the past six months some of the most audacious jobs in the history of safe-cracking."

Menasco paused and glanced furtively about him again

" The mints!"

" The mints?" whispered Jimmy,stricken with awe.

" Philadelphia—Denver—San Francisco —all within three months! Not a leak - you understand? Not a word has come out

" Millions—millions in gold ingots have been stolen. Last night the chief told me the story—until the whole thing is cleared I cannot tell you more than that."

" But where is Dago Frank?"

Menasco lifted his hands and rolled his eyes toward heaven.

" Then where is the gold?"

Menasco hesitated.

" You can draw your own conclusions. I am stationed in New York. Every ship," he added, significantly, " which sails for South America is watched.

" We have positive evidence that the gold is going to South America. In fact, the chief as much as admitted that some has already been shipped."

" This Dago Frank," asked Jimmy, curiously—" what does he look like? Haven't I seen his pictures in the papers—wasn't it at the time of the Panama bank robberies?"

After another cautious look around him Menasco slipped his hand into his inner coat pocket and fetched out a post card photograph. Face-down he slid it across the table-cloth to Jimmy, who studied it with grave interest

It was not a very pleasant countenance to gaze upon, a square face, hard and bitter, with malevolent mouth and a weak chin The eyes were small and very bright and dark.

The most distinguishing mark was a scar or a birthmark, perfectly round, which adorned the center of the left cheek. It was as if some one might have dropped a red-hot penny there at one time.

Jimmy grunted and shook his head in appreciation of the wickedness of this one, and pushed the photograph back to his friend.

Menasco was smiling faintly.

" Jimmy, it's really none of my business, but will you let me know how your affair with Miss Raffles turns out? To make it a fifty-fifty proposition, I'll break a departmental rule and keep you informed out at Gold River, in case we should happen to pot Blackthorne. That's the order now—take no chances, shoot him on sight!"

A look came swiftly into Jimmy's eyes, malignant, startling'

" Why, Jim!" began Menasco, astonished.

Jimmy vouchsafed nothing, yet the look in his eyes did not subside for nearly a minute.

XI.

SHORTLY after eleven o'clock Jimmy left the Van Stettlin and he had so much confidence in Menasco's analysis of the affair that he decided to ignore completely that instruction in the note from the girl to " dress differently."

Some hours earlier a cold, white fog had crept in from the Atlantic and shrouded the city. The air was chilly and possessed of a certain unpleasant, clammy quality, the atmosphere which sometimes pervades New York during that uncertain season when winter lets up and spring begins to take hold

Street lights were sanctified with misty halos; the pavements became oily black mirrors, and taxicabs and automobiles went about their businesses with a wary stealth of movement.

With nearly an hour to kill before keeping his appointment at the obelisk, Jimmy went slowly up Fifth Avenue, deep in thought. His light coat clung damply to his figure, and his half-burned, unlighted cigar jutted at a speculative angle from his mouth.

He believed and he did not believe all that the secret-service operative had confided to him. He was willing enough to agree, considering the elaborate and scientifically verified statements of others in

Menasco's department, that Blackthorne was and had been all the while a thousand miles to the south of him

He was willing to agree with Menasco's intelligent and convincing explanations of the black hairs, the note from his mother, her disappearance, the deceptive appearance of the man in the elevator.

But what he stubbornly refused to believe was that the girl in the red sailor-hat was associated in any way with a doubtful enterprise

Now Jimmy knew for certainty that he was not in love with the girl in the red hat, and he was also placidly aware that it would require very little encouragement on her part to make him part with whatever of this admirable reserve and indifference that remained

It has been said very often that that divine moment in a man's life when he looks upon the face of the one woman shaped for him by an amiable destiny passes by frequently without his being aware of its existence, until too late.

Probably that is true. Probably it is true that many a man, pausing at a street crossing, has gazed into the strange face of the one woman who could make his life ideally happy—that gaze enduring in the halted second before the face is whisked along in the human current, never again, on this earth, to be witnessed.

Jimmy had gazed into many faces—faces lovely and mysterious—in his transits from one part of the world to another, and he had always recognized the sensation of admiration, and had gratified it.

Perhaps he might have loved some of them, or one of them. Heaven knows! But certainly (so he believed) his emotions were alive enough at the moment of his encounter with the girl to convince him soon afterward that she was that one.

To be sure, his emotion in this case might have been governed by a very short-lived infatuation, an infatuation which would melt away when the cloud of mystery which attended her was reduced to the thin air of perfect comprehension.

Such a time was doomed to come inevitably. Would she stand the test? Jimmy believed so, devoutly.

And he believed, devoutly—because he was a man in whose life chance was an important factor that a kindly fate had guided her to him the same fate which had guided him so frequently when his feet, left to themselves, would have strayed into disastrous channels.

Yet not entirely for this reason did Jimmy cling so tenaciously to his notion that the girl was sincere and honest. He tried to visualize that quality in her which compelled him to cling to that notion -that spirit, or entity, which all of the parts of her combined caused to exist

There was "something about her"; that was all.

It was not that she was exceptionally good to look upon, nor was it her delicate reserve, her dark-eyed candor, her youth, nor, least of all, her aloofness, or any one of a dozen other reasons which he could enumerate easily.

The very notion of her was troubling, distressing, yet wonderfully pleasant. Perhaps, out of such a deep, sweet ache, an invincible love might spring. Did such an event remain to be reckoned with?

So deeply was Jimmy absorbed in this engaging problem that he was unaware for several moments that he was no longer walking alone.

Some one had approached him from behind on catlike feet, and was now resolutely marching abreast of him.

Jimmy might have gone on dozens of paces without becoming aware of the presence, had not at that moment his silent companion giggled ever so softly, and touched his arm with a gentle but compelling hand.

Bracing himself for the usual hard-luck story, Jimmy slowed down a bit, and, moved by another suspicion, kept the basement of one eye on guard over his gold-plated watch chain.

Presently he glanced down, favored at this spot by an overhead street lamp, and what he beheld caused him to flush with anger; then become instantly cool and wakeful.

Yes, his companion was none other than his pink-faced acquaintance of the forenoon.

A benevolent smile had found its way to the stout man's thin, long mouth, and his eyes were twinkling merrily.

"I beg your pardon for this intrusion," he said, in a contrite voice; "but I found, after all, that Henry Morgan was the man I wanted to interview. James Webb, as far as we are concerned, does not exist, does he?"

"I'm sure I can't enlighten you on that point," replied Jimmy, coolly. "I don't know your friend, but now you have the honor of addressing Henry Morgan, what do you want?"

The benevolent grin was swallowed in a mouthful of appreciative, soft laughter.

"You are a most difficult man to shadow," he replied, without malice. "I would have missed you entirely had it not been your mentioning very thoughtfully that you had an appointment at the Van Stettlin at six.

"I dined in the Etruscan room, a few tables away from you and your friend. When you arose—I followed. And now," he concluded, gleefully, "here I am!"

"Simple enough for any child to understand!" agreed Jimmy, with a sniff. "And now that I am so honored, what are we going to do about it? In other words, what's on your chest?"

The stranger had hold of Jimmy's arm now, and he seemed to be pondering his reply carefully.

Jimmy was only vaguely aware of the presence behind them of three young men, each in an advanced stage of intoxication. They were chanting a song to the stars, a ballad in Italian, although any one, no matter how badly intoxicated, could certainly see that the stars were hidden by a desolating fog.

The arms of these three were linked together, and they were swaying first to one side of the sidewalk, and then to the other, in the irregular but very joyous pendulum movement which is a characteristic of men who have had one or two too many.

The man at Jimmy's side suddenly had become serious. Through the chanting of the revelers, he said very distinctly:

"I have an important matter to discuss with you, Mr. Morgan if I can hope to have a few minutes of your time. It is such a matter as would be indiscreet to discuss upon the open thoroughfare.

"Now, if"—he hesitated—"of course," he added hastily, "I would not dream of keeping you from an appointment, if that is why you are here."

"No, I haven't an appointment," replied Jimmy more amiably. "But I have always believed in the epigram that there is safety in numbers of street-lights. To be frank with you, I will admit that I don't like the way you go about meeting people.

"You remind me of a cat. You might have startled me when you walked up so softly just now."

"It is in reference to your position as assayer with the Argonaut Mining Corporation of Nevada. You see, I know about that, don't I? You are to be Mr. Thorndike's assistant. A very, very fine man—Mr. Thorndike."

"Why didn't you come over to our table to-night, at dinner? I have nothing to say about my position under Mr. Thorndike. You'll have to see Mr. Radcliff; he hired me. Who the devil are you, anyway?"

"That message—that message this forenoon—from her!" reminded the fat man. "You see, I am your friend. Furthermore, I could not discuss our business before a secret-service operative. Out of the question!"

He seemed mildly indignant.

"Absurd!" And he repeated the word several times. "Absurd! Absurd!"

"In that case," said Jimmy, a little worried, "I will give you exactly thirty minutes. I am leaving for Gold River to-morrow on the Twentieth Century."

"Yes, yes, I know," agreed the other. "According to my recollection, there is a quiet, little café near by, where we can chat undisturbed. I—I must apologize again for the catlikeness of my approach."

"Lead the way," requested Jimmy irritably. "Remember — a half-hour — no more."

They walked northward for a few blocks in silence, then his companion led him down a side street

Near Sixth Avenue, casting a surreptitious glance up and down the street, he

opened a basement door, and they entered a long and narrow hallway, with yellow paper on the walls and ceiling, faintly lighted by greasy electric lamps.

At the end of this was a room containing, besides the entrance by which they had come, a door, open, disclosing a flight of dirty, unpainted stairs leading above.

At the back were a brace of two high and narrow windows covered with newspapers. A half-dozen round imitation-mahogany tables were arranged in a circle.

Green side-lamps lighted the place eerily, and the breath given out by it was that of the cheap Italian table d'hôte, with boiling olive-oil and doubtful red wine struggling for first honors.

When they entered the room they were the exclusive occupants. But when they were seated, a dark figure came in noiselessly by the stairway, and at the same time the three gay young roisterers appeared through the yellow hall.

Noisily these three occupied a table across the room and pounded loudly for attention.

"What will you drink?" Jimmy's host was inquiring.

A red-haired Italian, with fierce, dark mustache, was awaiting their pleasure.

"Beer—Budweiser, if you have it, and bring the bottle unopened," added Jimmy prudently

He frankly did not like the atmosphere of the place, and was vaguely but suddenly suspicious of the whim which had brought the three gay young Italians at their heels.

"Chianti," said the pink-faced man, and, as if in gentle reproof, "open the bottle down-stairs, if you like."

"Has she sent you to me with another message?" inquired Jimmy, when the waiter went to the other table.

"This time I come from another," was the reply, accompanied by the benevolent smile.

It was a soft, smug smile, and Jimmy disliked it immensely. He looked at his watch.

"You have exactly twenty minutes to get it off your mind. I must be out of here at ten minutes of twelve. Now—out with it!"

The stranger leaned closer, and dropped his voice to a most confidential tone.

"What is it worth to you to forget about Gold River, Nevada?"

"I suspected something of the kind," said Jimmy energetically. "What figure are you prepared to offer?"

The stout man looked at him in real surprise. Perhaps he had not imagined his task would be so easy.

"Oh, ten thousand," he said in an off-hand manner.

"Why?" asked Jimmy softly.

"You mean—"

"Why don't you want me to go to Gold River?"

The fat man settled down and tapped the tips of the fingers of his left hand with the forefinger of his right, as if he intended to strike numerical reasons from them.

"In the first place," he said, "you will find that Gold River is a very unhealthy place."

"But the climate of Nevada is wonderful!" contradicted Jimmy pleasantly. "The river—the desert, close by—the mountain air—"

"Please do not jest with me," requested the fat stranger severely. "I am calling your attention to the fact that your life would not be safe if you went to Gold River.

"I tell you as a friend," he went on earnestly, "because you do not know the conditions there. That is true, isn't it?"

"Perhaps it is," agreed Jimmy.

"You think you are being sent to Gold River as Mr. Thorndike's assistant. Well, let me tell you, young man, that you are being sent there for no such reason! What do you think of that, eh?"

"Go on," said Jimmy, interested.

"You are being sent to Gold River because certain individuals are looking for a respectable young mining engineer to be made the goat in a very dark enterprise"

"Officials of the Argonaut?"

"I mention no names. Why are they offering such a high salary for an assayer? Why, the thing is doubtful on the very face of it'

"Now" he leaned still farther forward, so that his breath all but struck Jimmy's

face—" the interests I represent are doing their uttermost to put to an end the evil practises of these others.

" As a friend, I repeat, it is partly in your own interests that I advise you to stay away. In addition, your going there would complicate matters for us."

" In other words," said Jimmy calmly, " you represent Thorndike's crowd?"

The fat man blinked, then shook his head decisively.

" I represent no one that you know. Let me tell you, further, that who you are makes no difference. If you were Jim Smith, or John Jones, or Willie Green, I would have approached you just the same.

" I admit, we have bought other men off who have been sent out there. Well, is my price satisfactory?"

Jimmy's answer was delayed by the arrival of an anonymous bottle of beer and a black bottle woven with reeds of Chianti

Before his eyes the red-mustached Italian lifted off the metal cap and poured Jimmy's glass full of steamy beer. Filling the fat man's glass with dark-red wine, he went back to the other table, where a conversation in Italian was in progress.

Jimmy was shaking his head slowly but emphatically.

" Such kindness from a perfect stranger almost makes me cry," he said. " No, sir, I am not for sale! I am a working man, with a good job, and it is against my principles to sell out my boss."

The red-faced man flushed angrily.

" You will be sorry—" he began.

" No, I won't," contradicted Jimmy amiably, sipping the foam.

" Very good. I won't buy you off. But I'll tell you what I'll do.

" Postpone leaving until one week from to-day, and I will give you five thousand in cash. Get that? Five thousand dollars in cash!"

" Do you mean that?" breathed Jimmy eagerly.

" Yes, sir!"

" Well! If it's worth five thousand dollars of your money to keep me away from Gold River for a week, there certainly must be five thousand dollars' worth of excitement waiting for me out there, if I hurry!"

The fat man's smile was not benevolent.

" All right," he murmured; " no hard feelings."

" Certainly not!"

The kindly blue eyes were searching past Jimmy's shoulder with an expression speculative and concerned.

Apropos of nothing, he then remarked:

" Isn't that wop a funny-looking chap?"

And Jimmy, in whom curiosity was not an entirely dormant quality, turned his head.

He saw the three young Italians with their heads very close together, talking in whispers.

" Which one?" asked Jimmy, turning back to his companion.

A small, red hand was drawing back to the fat man's side. There was a little white powder dusted on one of his finger-tips.

" The little one, I meant," he said.

Jimmy dropped his eyes to his half-emptied beer-glass. His brain did not see red because of what he had gleaned from this clumsy actor's latest movement.

No, he was not angry. He was merely astonished and irritated. It was as if the man had frankly stated that he doubted his intelligence.

" Why, you poor slob!" summarized Jimmy. " You poor slob!"

He wrapped his long, tanned fingers about the beer-glass and threw its contents squarely against the plump, red nose.

The beer splattered all over the fat man's ruby countenance and dripped foamily upon his shirt-front and down either lapel of his coat, like fresh sea-water.

Any one who could have seen his face then for the first time would have said that it was surely impossible for such a face ever to look benevolent.

He got up so quickly that he overturned his chair.

" All right, boys," he shouted, " get him!"

Whereupon Jimmy arose from his own chair as swiftly as if he had been shot out of it.

XII.

Men can be divided into two classes, those who look like fighters, and those who

do not although appearances are frequently deceiving.

There was no deception, however, in the appearance of Jimmy Webb. Those three flaccid young members of New York's underworld should have been able at a glance to know that the broad shoulders and the peculiarly thin waist-line were of a construction not infrequently seen in sawdust squares.

Yet, quite as methodically and calmly as if they were on their way to stick a pig, they arose and went toward Jimmy

To be sure, they probably expected a lively contest, but of course they could not have been expected to know how men were wont to fight in the good old days in Klondike saloons.

There is an old Alaskan saying: "My carcass can carry so much lead; at that point I quit fighting." And it was this one that Jimmy was prepared to vindicate

As I have said, he came out of his chair as if he had been set loose from it by a charge of gunpowder, and an angry sound was issuing from his half-parted lips

He kicked the table over backward, and the sharp edge of it descended with soft but terrible velocity upon the insteps of the fat stranger. His agony was so intense because of this that it is doubtful if for hours any fight in the entire history of pugilism would have been fast enough to interest him. He sat down on the floor, squealing.

Jimmy had the rounded back of the chair in his right hand. His left was doubled and stony hard.

Snapping the chair backward, down, up, and over, he brought the foremost leg of it raking across the face of the largest of the three, who, as it happened, was nearest.

That one went out of action without a word of comment, rolling over upon the dirty floor, making dull, grinding sounds with his teeth.

The second rushed in for a clinch, and in some fashion his legs became inextricably tangled with the legs of the chair.

Forgetting Jimmy in his lunging efforts to free himself before sprawling, he toppled so temptingly close to Jimmy's brewing haymaker that he could have conceivably been conscious for the ensuing few moments of nothing but a sudden display of brilliant, fierce stars.

Jimmy dropped the chair.

Malevolently shining white metal flicked out of the pocket of the remaining warrior not a gun, but a thin, wickedly efficient stiletto

This was different. Jimmy was not exactly afraid of knives, but he did dislike them immensely. He hesitated a moment too long.

The knife went up.

Jimmy jumped forward.

The knife came down, sliced keenly between his left eye and his left ear.

And then Jimmy grabbed the knife-wielder by the shoulders and threw him with such violence that the man went staggering and slipping backward, trying desperately to gain a foothold ere he tumbled against the wall or a table.

Jimmy followed him swiftly.

The knife dropped under a chair.

Terror showed in the little, black eyes for a moment, then the Italian covered, crouching, shifting his feet in a swift dance-movement, ducking from left to right, watchful but absolutely on the defensive.

Jimmy's steam at this point crept slowly up into the safety-valve.

He was mad. He was hopping mad. The white face, the cruel, little black eyes infuriated him, and the gash on the side of his face opened by the fellow's knife did not act as a sedative.

He did not wait for an opening.

He leaped. He hit. He hit again and again. And yet once more he hit.

The Italian's guard went down and he was groggy.

Jimmy closed in, smashing blows to his body, and waiting for the reappearance of the disappearing chin

What then occurred must be expressed in terms of primitive sound

Smack! Whack! Slam!

The Italian, with his head out of sight underneath the table, groaned.

Jimmy, wiping the blood away from his mouth, sprang for the yellow corridor.

A man stood there with a revolver in his right hand. He was the red-mustached proprietor, and he looked determined.

Jimmy saluted him with a Spanish oath, perhaps because his last fight under similar auspices had taken place in a little café in Lima, Peru.

He backed away, pulling a chair as he went.

At that moment the lights in the room were extinguished

Perhaps the fat man, recovering slightly from the exquisite agony across his insteps, had had enough presence of mind to turn the switch on the wall.

Certainly the darkening of the room caught the Italian proprietor unprepared.

Jimmy heard him mutter.

Then a bright and thundering streak of red flame came from the spot where he had seen the Italian standing. The shot went wild

Backing up, Jimmy felt the window-pane. He smashed it with the chair, and leaped through the opening, taking the chance of falling into a sunken courtyard, or upon broken glass, or both.

For some reason the Italian proprietor did not fire again

On hands and knees Jimmy crawled over damp and slimy stone flagging for a few feet, then stood up.

In one respect his guess had been correct. He was in a courtyard, although it was not sunken, nor did it contain broken bottles.

Above him the city lights glowed against the bank of fog, palely luminating the courtyard in which he was a prisoner.

A stone wall about six feet high enclosed it. Running to the end, he pulled himself up, discovering barely in time that a line of jagged glass set in concrete ran along the top of the wall.

Another courtyard or back-yard gave from the wall's other side.

Up-stairs in the building he had just quit a window opened.

A man shouted, and Jimmy dropped to the other side, stinging the soles of his feet upon the flat concrete.

The rear of a low, black building frowned at him

Moving along the left wall, with his heart high in his throat, Jimmy broke into a run.

He entered an areaway, and at the extremity of this, through an iron grating, he made out the gleam of a street-light

Attaining the gate, he paused. He heard footsteps, solid and important, approaching down the sidewalk.

A policeman passed, swinging his night-stick. When the click of his heels was drowned in the clatter of a passing Elevated train, Jimmy lifted the latch, stepped out, and closed the iron gate behind him

With the exception of the stout policeman, the street was empty, and black and wet under the thickening fog.

Jimmy lighted a new cigar and strode briskly toward Fifth Avenue.

He pulled out his new watch. It was exactly twelve o'clock!

At risk of being caught he started running, adjusting his pace as closely as possible to that of a pedestrian anxious to reach home, not that of a burglar or a pickpocket worried over possible detection.

To emphasize his respectability he started whistling loudly. Any one with an average amount of intelligence should certainly understand that Jimmy was nothing more than a peaceful citizen in a hurry!

The camouflage was successful. He reached the southeastern entrance of Central Park without being questioned, although once he passed a policeman who viewed his whistling flight with speculative interest. Fortune and the policeman were on the right side, so that the gash on his left cheek passed by unobserved.

At length, racing down dim-lit paths bordered by shrubbery, he attained the obelisk.

It was very dark here. Over the trees the white glow of Fifth Avenue marked this as a civilized place, but in the black darkness, with the gloomy fog all around him, the spot selected by the girl for their meeting could have passed for midnight at the White Horse Pass, or on a Bolivian plateau.

Anxiously he sat down near the Egyptian shaft to wait.

Perhaps she had already come, and gone!

Momentarily he was distracted by the keen thrust of pain in the knife-wound. He fingered it tenderly.

The blood was drying, but that side of

his face, he imagined, must be a terrible sight. It would never do for her to see him in such an undignified condition.

He produced a clean handkerchief, and succeeded at length in dampening it on the grass which was heavy with dew from the fog.

With great care he wiped the blood away. The wound was still bleeding slightly.

He was about to complete this absorbing occupation when, far down the sightless road, two brilliant shafts of white light spun gracefully, like scythes, over the tops of shrubbery, became stationary, and threw a keen glare down the road past the shaft.

Swiftly they advanced upon him, and in another moment the throb of a high-tuned motor vibrated upon his ear drums.

With a rush of wind the car drew abreast, brakes grinding softly, a block of glittering crystal and black.

Jimmy's heart was violating all reasonable laws. He crept to the opened window.

A hand fluttered out, a small hand, immaculately white, in the soft luminance of the side-lamp.

It was soft, warm, and pleasant to the touch of his hardened palms. Now Jimmy, in his present state of emotion, might have gallantly kissed that hand, but he was one of those uncultivated beings who believed that, unless he could deposit his manly kisses upon the mark which nature had designed for them, he would rather postpone the pleasure, or forego it entirely

Besides, it is well to repeat that Jimmy was not yet in love with the owner of that hand.

A light, small but proficient, winked on in the dark plush ceiling. He climbed upon the running board and crowded his shoulders through the opening.

A disturbing and beautiful white face—a pair of restless, dark eyes—the ghost of a smile—a suggestion of nestling furs-

Jimmy's several senses registered and appreciated a number of things

She was garbed for the evening—the opera perhaps—with a sprig of silver egrets growing out of amazing coils of sheer black hair, black fox at her throat, and the sheen of a black-and-white evening gown revealed at her bosom.

The expression of her face changed quickly to one of alarm and concern.

"You've been hurt!" she gasped in a voice of dismay.

Secretly Jimmy was delighted, but his face was stern as he replied indifferently:

"Only a scratch. It's nothing. May I come in?"

"No, no," she replied hastily. "I will come out."

She gathered her skirts about her, and Jimmy opened the door.

Something tender and warm oozed into his veins at the sight of her concern in the presence of his bleeding wound.

He observed furtively that her slippers were small and of black satin, with tiny, sparkling ornaments on the insteps.

Then she led him away from the light of the limousine.

"I have come at great risk," she told him in a low voice. "The entire scheme, I fear, must be abandoned."

"Ah!" said Jimmy in a disappointed voice. Had Menasco's assumption been correct, after all?

"I no longer want you to go to Gold River. You understand? It is very unsafe!"

Jimmy felt slightly relieved at that.

"Then you are through with me? You mean, I don't fit?"

"No. I have grown afraid."

Menasco was right, Jimmy concluded. She was an amateur; she was quitting.

"Too big a job, eh?"

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Why not let me in?" suggested Jimmy softly.

"But I don't understand you! I say, something unforeseen has arisen. Gold River will be unsafe for you. You must not go. You will be killed!"

Doubt, unpleasant and dark, entered Jimmy's mind and mingled with his disappointment.

"Then you are in the Thorndike crowd," he said coolly.

She drew away from him with an indrawn breath

"No," she whispered. "What made you say that?"

"Didn't you know that the Thorndike crowd had tried to buy me off? The red-

faced fat man -the man with the pleasant smile?"

"Buy you off!"

"Why, certainly," he said amiably. "We couldn't agree on terms; so some friends of his tried to pursuade me by other methods.

"There was a knife. This wound—you see? But I can fight a little, when necessary."

"The Thorndike crowd did that?"

"So I gathered from what he said."

She seemed amazed, incredulous.

"You will go then, anyway?"

"I will go to-morrow—in spite of anybody."

"Would you go if I asked you not to?"

"Yes," said Jimmy.

She was silent for a moment He could almost feel her eyes in the dark.

"Then there is little more to be said," she replied stiffly. "Good night!"

"One moment," requested Jimmy.

She started to move away, but he imprisoned a silk-clad wrist. She struggled a moment, then became quiet.

"Well?" she asked coldly

"There are some things to be said before you go. I leave for Gold River in the morning. We may not see each other again, not that you care, naturally "

"I do care!" she protested with heat "You see, I am responsible."

"Not any longer," he contradicted. "I am going to Gold River on my own responsibility. If I thought you would worry, for any reason, it would make me uncomfortable.

"So I am going on my own. You and others have been generous enough to warn me that Gold River is likely to be an unhealthy spot for James Webb—or Henry Morgan.

"I'll have to admit that it doesn't worry me very much. Anyway, there's a long chance that we two won't meet again. That's what I meant.

"So, before we part, won't you be kind and tell me one or two things? Your name—and what you've been driving at and where my mother—"

"Your mother is at home—safe."

"At home'"

"I left her there at eight o'clock this evening. Now—may I go?"

"Not yet," said Jimmy firmly. "You haven't answered my other questions."

"But of what interest is my name to you?" she panted. "It would mean nothing."

"Perhaps we might meet again, some day. It would be embarrassing not to know your name in that case."

"Very well if we should chance to meet again you may call me- Janet!"

"Nothing else?"

' That is enough for the present."

"Fair enough—Janet," agreed Jimmy cheerfully.

"Perhaps you'd prefer Mary, or Elizabeth, or Ethel—"

"No, Janet suits you perfectly. I almost suspected that Janet was your name."

"May I go now?"

"I'd like to let you go now, because this wet grass will ruin those lovely slippers. I have only one more question."

"Remember," she cautioned, "I cannot violate my word of honor, nor will I incriminate myself. I will explain nothing."

"I wouldn't think of you doing either," he replied earnestly. "All you need to tell me before you go is—who was the man talking with you in the lobby of the Van Stettlin last evening?"

"Must I tell you that?"

"If you will. I simply desire to convince myself that you are innocent of knowing a certain detestable man. I have some proof, but I want you to confirm that."

"With pleasure! He was the same man I left less than half an hour ago when I came here!"

"His name?"

"Is that very important?"

"It is of the utmost importance!"

She jerked her hand away, and began moving slowly toward the limousine.

"Since you can be satisfied with nothing but the unpleasant truth," she said very softly, "his name is—Blackthorne"

Jimmy was paralyzed.

"That can't be!" he cried. "You're fooling me! Blackthorne is in New Orleans!"

"You're certain?"

She laughed softly.

Jimmy leaped toward her voice.

He heard her gasp, as if in terror.

"Run—run for your life!" she screamed. "Look—standing there—behind you!"

With something curdling in his heart, Jimmy sprang around, doubling up his fists, staring, tensed.

But there was nothing at all, as far as he could see; nothing but darkness, the gray, clammy darkness of an Atlantic fog.

And standing squarely behind him, ghostly and mysterious, was the Egyptian obelisk'

In another direction he heard an innocent noise—the slamming of a door. Immediately this was followed by the accelerated purr of a motor, the lubricated grinding of enmeshing gears.

He hastened to the roadway. Vanishing swiftly into the mist was the red tail-light To pursue that powerful car was absurd. It was an acutely uncomfortable situation

And his ire was further fanned when he discovered that he had no more cigars left. His frame of mind could almost be said to have been disgruntled, as, regaining Fifth Avenue, he climbed upon the roof of a Riverside bus.

The only consoling thought left to him was that he would soon, after these many misadventures, again see his mother. Many things would then be explained. Certainly, by her he would be given some explanation of the girl's strange motives.

Three-quarters of an hour later he sauntered into the apartment

The night watchman was waiting for him on the front steps.

"You, Mr. Webb?"

Jimmy nodded wonderingly

"Mrs. Webb wanted me to give you a message. She was in such a hurry, she says, she didn't have time to write it down 'Tell my son when he arrives home this evening,' she says, 'that I have been called away on a most important errand. I may be gone for weeks.'"

"Blazes!" snorted Jimmy. "How long ago did she leave?"

"Fifteen twenty minutes."

"Alone?"

"No, sir; some lady called for her."

"The deuce you say!" snorted Jimmy. "What did this lady look like? Can you describe her?"

"I can't say, sir. I didn't see her that plain."

"Was she—young? About—so tall? In black? Black furs?"

"I I disremember," confessed the watchman anxiously. "It was so dark."

"Did she drive up in a limousine?" snapped Jimmy impatiently.

"Yeh—a big, bright-red limousine!" assented the watchman eagerly.

(To Be Continued NEXT WEEK.)

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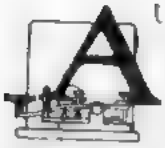
In Next Week's *Railroad Man's Magazine*

AUSTIN IRBY—OPERATOR.—No. 6.

"Fatheads!"

BY WILL MACMAHON.



AUSTIN IRBY, emergency telegrapher on the Pittsburgh-West Division, was not far past his sixteenth birthday, but in the very midst of a towering ambition to banish all peril and risk in the operating of trains. His determination was inflexible—he would make of Railway America an institution so safe that employees need not say their prayers and passengers and shippers could forgive and forget the once affrighting word "wreck."

"Inventor Irby!" he proudly called himself—to himself. For the present he discreetly refrained from publicly claiming the title.

There was, in his judgment, a "fierce bunch of kidders on this road."

Austin's fervor for taking precautions with semaphore and signal light was new born and he frankly recognized it as being directly due to a violent reaction in his principles. Only lately he recalled with shame, his inventive faculty had been occupied with the making of an appliance that would permit him to sleep on the job while the tower signals were tied "Safe, proceed!" east and west on the double tracks.

He called it the "Automatic Auxiliary Announcer," or the "Coal Scuttle Alarm," and he could shudder realistically at the harrowing experience it brought.

The thing should have worked as smoothly as a warning bell on a store door. Any passing train was expected to cut a controlling wire, permitting the suspended bucket inside the telegraph office to fall noisily and thereby awakening the young inventor for a prompt report to the despatcher.

But that wire was of great tensile strength and treacherously entangled itself in an engine's pony trucks, jerked the coal bucket out of the office and into the cab and stopped nothing less than the lordly Limited Mail. There would have been immediate personal embarrassment in this mishap, and a two-weeks' lay-off without pay for Operator Irby if it had not developed that this train was speeding to what would have been a fatal head-on collision with a still faster special.

"Gee!" Austin exclaimed mentally in reviewing the remarkable incident, "if I can prevent wrecks when I'm pounding my ear on the company's time, what can't I do while I'm wide awake!"

Inspired by that plausible hypothesis, he began to reveal to the despatcher's office at least once every hour of the night, through superfluous remarks or unnecessary questions, that here was the child operator of the road suffering severely from sleeplessness. He faithfully obeyed even that exacting paragraph in the "Book of Rules" that requires semaphore men to show a danger signal when trains approach and to pull it white in sight of the engineer.

But all this fanatical attention to duty did not satisfy the new convert to Safety First. He would improve on the essentials of signaling, from foundation to roof.

"Say, 'V,'" he remarked late one night on the train wire to his friend and champion, Vic Ryan, third trick despatcher, "why not have 'Safe' on the semaphore show upright instead of hanging down?"

"I'll bite!" Mr. Ryan flashed back in his swift, musical Morse. "What's the answer, old man?"

"Because—" Austin began with the intention of explaining that this position of

the semaphore arm would make impossible a false "Safe" signal if the actuating wire accidentally broke while at "Danger."

"Break!" some would-be humorist put in anonymously. "Why can't the right-hand track be the left? Variety's sake, you know!"

"Get out, you fathead!" the boy replied, hotly. "Say, V –"

But still another spoil-sport interrupted him with:

"Hey, kid, let's have the trains run upside down for a change!"

"G T H !" Operator Irby advised, furiously, in telegraphic cursing. Despatcher Ryan ended the wire scrap with an impartial demand for silence all around.

Whereupon, his aggrieved former pupil put pencil to a dozen pages of the company's pad-paper in an exhaustive elucidation of what he imagined to be a radical idea. He illustrated it with sketches of an upright safe semaphore and a down-hanging one, the latter showing a broken wire in the attitude of a snake suffering the agony of cramps, and sent it all by Railway Mail Service to Mr. Ryan.

Vic answered in copperplate script, but briefly.

Not new. Saw it on Santa Fe last year. Would cost Pittsburgh-West $5,000 to install

Austin was only partly mollified.

"Uhuh!" he told himself, darkly. "This road's signal system was put in by fatheads! I could have saved 'em five thousand beans if I'd been in the business at that time."

He carefully folded away Mr. Ryan's penmanship for future copying exercises. That "$5,000" not only looked as if it had been etched with acid, but the ciphers were matched like pearls.

Mr. Irby's next scheme was aimed at the prevention of rear-end collisions where the engineer of the oncoming train drives through fog, rain, or snow, past the unseen lantern of the rear brakeman from the train ahead

He wrote direct to the veteran superintendent of the road:

I would respectfully suggest that brakemen be armed with Roman candles to bombard the offending engineer with colored balls of fire while he yet is one hundred yards away in the darkness

Surely, it was some smart Aleck of an office subordinate who made a penciled notation on the letter and sent it back to the serious-minded young writer

The scribble read.

Yours, for a safe and sane Fourth of July'

"The sarcastic, old fathead!" Austin muttered as he tore the page into tiny pieces. "Dog-gone him, anyhow, I'll keep my next big invention to myself until I get it patented and then the Pittsburgh-West will have to pay me a a royal royalty, you bet.

"Let me see, what shall I invent now? What's the greatest need in railroading for safety's sake?

"Uhuh, I know! An automatic device to prevent a train from running past a danger signal even if the engineer is asleep at the throttle. Now, that ought to be easy if—"

That monumental "if" vexed his waking hours and his dreams for several weeks, but he was unable to marshal his many vague ideas into a practicable plan. Intending to keep all a secret from his fellow operators along the line, he aroused their sharp curiosity by asking them guarded questions about automatic stopping devices.

It was not long before every one on the division, including the Slav track-walkers, suspected that Emergency Operator Irby had in mind an invention destined to revolutionize the signal systems of Railway America.

Then, one night while doing sick relief at an isolated tower, he received a typewritten letter that fired his ambition to a white heat. The envelope was marked "Personal," and the page was headed with the thrilling word "Confidential."

Austin glanced eagerly down to the signature and then he read the communication with growing excitement. It follows.

General Delivery,
Allegheny City, Pennsylvania

MY DEAR MR IRBY:

It has been called to my attention that you are an inventor of no mean ability. I am,

therefore, including you among the half dozen scientific men of this country who are being invited by the Railroad Presidents' Protective Association to submit plans for an automatic device that will safely arrest trains disregarding fixed signals.

The reward for a successful invention is five thousand ($5,000) dollars

Kindly keep this offer in the strictest confidence, and advise me at once as to your ideas on the subject

Very sincerely yours,

S T. UNGHARD,
Signal Engineer

"Unghard? Unghard?" the boy remarked musingly. "Don't know him, but that sounds like a technical person. He's probably a Swede expert on signals. Those foreigners are very thorough, I've heard.

"Some one in 'DI' or the super's office has told him about my upright safe signal or my Roman candle warning, I'll bet Now for my automatic stopping device and the five thousand beans!"

What a welcome five thousand dollars this would be! Austin was the main support of his foster-mother, little, old Granny Mowrey, and his make-believe sister, Agnes Helene Mowrey, her granddaughter, twelve years old.

The precocious girl was about to conquer public school and there was to follow not only high school but college. He was pledged to this educational program for her and eager to see it carried out.

That five thousand beans would eliminate scrimping and make happy all the members of this small family. He ardently hoped the railroad presidents would pay in cash: one has to be identified with a check, you know, and that is a bore.

If Operator Irby had not been obsessed by the letter's contents he might have seen that the signature was more Irish-American than Swedish, and then he would have remembered that Despatcher Vic Ryan delighted to perpetrate a practical joke. The fake initials and name both spelled and meant "Stung hard!"

Austin replied in the next mail.

MY DEAR MR. UNGHARD.

Your welcome letter finds me with exactly the device in mind that you need. I am working on some minor details, and in the mean time would greatly appreciate any little hint from you as to how to win the reward.

Very sincerely yours,

A IRBY,
Inventor

P S.—My plan can conform to any conditions

The answer to that appeal was embodied in the following "Conditions of Competition," which Austin did not know were excerpts or improvisations from the well-known requirements of a stopping device as published by the Train Control Board of the Interstate Commerce Commission:

1. The apparatus should be so constructed that the removal or failure of any essential part would cause the display of a stop-signal and the application of the train-brakes.

2. The apparatus should be so designed that it may be used on the open railway, or bridges, on elevated structures, in tunnels or subways, and where either steam or electricity is used as a propelling power

3 The apparatus should be so constructed as to conform to recognized standards of clearance of rolling equipment and structures, so that those portions of the apparatus placed on the roadway will not be subject to damage by rolling-stock or engines, or those portions placed in the vehicle be damaged by structures permitted to exist on the roadway

4 The system should operate under all weather conditions that permit the operation of trains

5 The engine apparatus should prevent release of the brakes after the application has been made until the train has been brought to a stop

6 The apparatus should be so constructed and installed that it will not constitute a source of danger to trainmen or other employees or passengers

7. Competitors must submit a typewritten or printed description of the device, giving all details in full

Inventor Irby was not discouraged by those formidable requirements, but he made a caustic comment to himself.

"Dog gone!" he murmured. "The Railroad Presidents' Protective Association doesn't want much! Oh, no, only about a million dollars' worth for its measly five thousand! But, I need the money!"

Specification Seven was peculiarly difficult. Austin had no typewriting machine and the word "printed" did not suggest

to him the function of a job printing establishment. Instead, he laboriously set to work to print with a pencil a lengthy explanation of his ideas. It read in letters that would not maintain a uniform size and lines that would not follow the horizontal.

MY DEAR MR. UNCHARD:

Here is my original plan for a mechanical train-stopping device, to be used in connection with the present railroad block systems in the United States, if not Europe, including the Scandinavian countries

For main line: At the distant signal attach to the underground semaphore-wire, along side the near rail, a torpedo on a plunger so constructed that it slides onto the rail when the semaphore is pulled to "Caution," and moves out of exploding range when the signal stands at "Proceed."

Note: The torpedoes may be fed to the plunger by a rifle-magazine device. That is a mere detail

Another capable alarm would be a siren-horn, operated by compressed air in a tank It would be blown by the weight of the engine on a tie, connection making forceful contact with the air valve

Those are *precautionary* measures, and they would be of great value during fog, rain, or snow, when it is hard to see the distant signal from the oncoming engine. They would particularly aid engineers who assume that a certain signal is *safe* because they have found it that way many times before.

Note: The explosion of the torpedo, or the blowing of the siren, should be immediately followed by a slackening of the train's speed and by two toots from the engine. *Otherwise* the conductor or a brakeman must *leap* to and pull the emergency cord overhead, and then investigate the condition of the engineer. He will be found asleep, or even *dead* (let us hope not *expired*, for his family's sake).

Now for the *chief* apparatus:

On the *home* signal attach to the semaphore-arm a continuation to reach out over the middle of the near track, so working that it is upright in the air while the signal is *safe*, and horizontal when at *danger!*

Then, through the roofs of all engine-cabs there should extend an upright bar of a proper height, attached to the air-brake line, and *independent* of the engineer's control

After that, if an engineer fails to hear when the distant signal torpedo explodes or the siren blows, and neither conductor nor brakemen are on the job, the *home* auxiliary rod will strike the *emergency* bar on the roof of the engine-cab, set the air-brake, and stop the speeding train headed for destruction, but providentially saved by my automatic *device*.

The cost of installing the apparatus would be *low*. In fact, it could be done by the shopmen, who might be glad to work for nothing in their spare time on behalf of the company and for the sake of humanity.

And any passenger would not be afraid to ride on the railroads; no, not even the *next you, new horror and holocaust*, if my *device* is in operation. Note: You can guess what railway I mean

Thanking you for your great kindness, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

A. E. IRBY

Austin had no middle name, but he was experimenting with the initial "E." It represented Edison to him and lend atmosphere to his enterprise.

He already felt the need of possessing visiting-cards with "Inventor" neatly engraved on the lower left-hand corner. And hardly had he mailed that letter than he began on another and gamely forced the cramped fingers of his right hand to carry on. It read:

I forgot to say that my *plan* is adaptable to yard and crossover signals of *small* height Use a movable arm from the signal reaching to an emergency air-brake lever on the near side of the cow-catcher *frame* or alongside the engine-cab. There would, of course, have to be an emergency lever on the *fireman's* side for engines *backing* past the signal. With this last-mentioned fact in mind, it might be well to have emergency bars protruding from the engine *cabs* on each side, and make all auxiliary rods work upward from the *base* of semaphores.

Another form of my automatic stopping *device* at the *home* signal would be a short arm alongside the rail, operating with the semaphore, and so constructed as to strike a projecting emergency handle on an extreme lower and outer part of the *engine* frame

I do *not* think the signal concerns or the air-brake people could forbid the use of my invention. It is an *additional* safeguard that they forgot to install. *But* I expect that the life insurance companies will fight tooth and toe-nail to *oppose* me

I have had *two* years' practical railroad experience as a telegraph operator, and my motive in perfecting an efficient and positive stopping *device* is to provide safety for the traveling public and my fellow workmen of railway America.

As to the five thousand dollars reward, I would prefer *cash*, if it is convenient to the railroad presidents. It would be hard to get rid of a check in my neighborhood. The

stores are small, and do not have that much money, even on Saturday nights.

Very sincerely yours,

AUSTIN EDISON IRBY

When Despatcher Vic Ryan, also unknowingly described as "My dear Mr. Unghard," read that painstaking effort embraced in the two letters and the springing into existence of the boy's middle name he grinned with the unholy joy of a successful practical joker.

He did not recognize that the germ of a real invention lurked in his young friend's plan, but he knew exactly how to get a further rise out of him.

"My dear Irby" next received a communication that was both exasperating and encouraging. It said:

Your scheme for actually stopping the train after the warning device has been actuated could not be installed without interfering with standard clearances, and, as described, would not be in accordance with Requirement No 1. Should the arm intended to stretch across the track and strike the lever on top of the cab fail to assume operative position, the train would proceed regardless of the signal indication

It would furthermore appear that the scheme described would be subject to serious interference by snow, sleet, or ice, thereby not meeting Requirement No. 4

While the scheme recommended is hardly sufficiently developed to meet our wants, should you be able to present data concerning a revised system along the lines specified, we should be pleased to hear further from you

This letter was signed, familiarly, "Unghard." Vic Ryan, having hooked his fish, was careful not to call attention to the weakness of "S. T." in the tackle.

"Pathead!" Austin breathed, angrily. "This Unghard is a squarehead, all right. O-ho! He says 'our' and 'we.' Now, I'll bet he's in cahoots with the Railroad Presidents' Protective Association and they're trying to gouge me out of my five thousand dollars. I'll fool 'em, darned if I don't."

His method of foiling the conspirators was to get into communication with a firm of patent attorneys. Thereafter, he had real work to do to convince Granny Mowrey that the family's meager savings should be depleted to pay fees of unbelievable magnitude to get the *device* before the Commissioner of Patents at Washington, District of Columbia.

Agnes Helene, however, was enthusiastic over the invention. At her suggestion Austin bought a toy engine and rigged up a semaphore signal alongside the miniature rails. He used a clog, in lieu of an air system and it worked!

The two young experimenters were fascinated by the stopping device, playing all of an afternoon at railroading, but Granny scoffed. "'Twill take a moighty heavy weight to sthop a rale train," she remarked, pityingly, and was as hostile as the first Vanderbilt at the mention of air-brake.

"Lucky ye will be to get back what ye paid out to the law-w-w-yers!" she declared.

"But, watch this, Granny!" Austin pleaded.

He showed her that when the shoe-buttoner semaphore was erect at "Safe, proceed!" the locomotive could run round and round the circle of track, but after the signal was lowered to "Danger, stop!" the arm engaged with a hairpin loop atop the engine cab, a weight on a string dropped behind the tender and slowly, but inevitably stopped the suppositious engineer in his mad career.

"Th' way to prevint wrecks is for ivery railroader to watch his job," the little, old lady announced as she marched kitchenward. "Me own job roight now is to fry white-fish fer supper. Oi suppose th' lad will be showin' me how to do that wid a buttonhook one av these foine days!"

"Granny dear!" the girl called after her, "fry them in butter to-night. We're going to be rich now that Austin is an inventor!"

In the kitchen, Mrs. Mowrey stubbornly took out the lard pail.

"R-r-rich!" she muttered, testily.

Then she abruptly put away the pail and seized the butter crock.

Foine childer they are, entirely!" she murmured and soon there was an appetizing smoke curling out from the frying-pan that hog fat could not equal.

Agnes Helene, skilful at drawing, made the explanatory sketches for her make-be-

lieve brother's invention. She also drew a spirited picture of a fast train nearing a danger signal and lent speed to the scene merely by introducing a dog wildly racing after it

Austin thought this a stroke of genius and wondered if the imminent five thousand dollars could not be stretched to carry a gifted girl to Paris for painting lessons.

The model engine and semaphore and the various drawings were sent to the patent attorneys and then Operator Irby sharpened a half-dozen of the company's pencils and "printed" another masterpiece for the Swede fathead, as follows:

MY DEAR UNGHARD:

I am thoroughly convinced that my plan for an automatic stopping *device* is O. K.

You mention "standard clearances" as an objection. I gave you four points of contact on the engine at which to set the air-brake—the top of the cab, the side of same, or a part of the lower frame, or even the cow-catcher itself. Surely there is some one stopping-point that will not interfere with standard clearances. I do not expect you to make the locomotive look like a *porcupine* or a *pincushion*.

You further say: "Should the arm fail to assume operative position, the train would proceed regardless of the signal indication."

Kindly do me the justice to reread my description of the *device*. The signal-arm is a *continuation* of the semaphore in my overhead scheme. I am enclosing some drawings of my own and my assistant's to illustrate the meaning. My assistant is a young lady artist of no mean ability, as you can readily see

One of her sketches will show you the *home* semaphore stopping mechanism, which at *safety* points up instead of down, and at *danger* drops horizontally. Incidentally, *danger* should be the normal position of all signals, and some force should be necessary to pull the arm to *safety*. As at present constructed on the Pittsburgh-West Division, the wire-pulled semaphores have a habit of remaining at *safety* when they should show *danger*, owing to the wire stretching or breaking. This is not a regular habit with them, but I have known it to occur. We have *no* wrecks, because every man on the road watches his job, but still, it would be safer to install my *device*

Note: The *upright safe signal* is my plan, and, I believe, can be sold to any road except the Santa Fe. I am open to a cash offer, and I do not expect a fancy price

To resume: My idea of the semaphore-arm descending from an *upright* position to a *horizontal* position in the middle of the track is ideal for "stopping" purposes on any height of engine-cab, the *smaller* engines merely requiring a *higher* lever to meet the semaphore. You will not find any one but a fathead to deny that fact, I am sure

You mention "snow, ice, and sleet." If you wish the lever on the locomotive cab to be free at all times, simply jacket it with an electric heat or steam coil. That is easy.

You overlook my suggestions regarding the distant signal, with torpedo or siren warnings when at "Caution." I attach a great deal of importance to them, and I will tell you why.

Since my early youth I have been horrified occasionally by newspaper accounts of collisions due to disregarded or out-of-order distant signals. In addition to the lists of *dead* and *injured* gathered by reporters, I can *see* the *disaster* just as if I were on the fatal scene

I can *hear* the engineer say, "My G—!" as he throws the throttle in reverse and sands the track. Alas, too *late!* And I suspect that in the offices of the life insurance companies the well-fed and expensively clothed *executives* remark: "Ha, ha! Another good *advertisement* for our business!" All these horrors set my mind to work, and the result is a *device* that will make people forget whether to start the word with a W or an R (I mean "*Wreck*")

There also is the necessity of an additional flagging scheme at night or during fog, rain, or snow Rear brakemen are not anxious to dash back in the dark, and there always is a space of time from when they leave their motionless trains until they set torpedoes on the rail that might spell the word that everybody knows now (Wreck)

Why not advise the Railroad Presidents' Protective Association to adopt my Roman candle signal? I will explain: Suppose that Rear Brakeman Smith is equipped with one when his lantern cannot be seen, and a fast train is approaching thunderingly. He aims the Roman candle, and shoots a fiery stream fully three hundred feet up-track, and Engineer Jones acts on the hint just in *time*

I would sell this scheme at a reasonable figure, and it would help out the fireworks' manufacturers, who have been compelled to lay off employees since the adoption of a safe and sane Fourth of July

Finally, after the installation of my *upright* semaphore, my *Roman candle* signal, and my *brake-setting device*, I would enjoy riding behind even a *blindfolded* engineer.

Please note what I said in my previous letter about the *cashing* of the check

Very sincerely yours,

A EDISON IRBY, Inventor.

Austin, although convinced that his train stopping device was a success, could not let well enough alone. The Patent Office was much too deliberate for an impatient young genius.

He determined to make an actual test of the apparatus with a real, life-size train. That should clear the way for an immediate royalty.

He chose for his confederate the engineer whose life he had saved with the Coal Scuttle Alarm, an appliance that the boy now held in well-deserved contempt both for its crudity and low sentiment of evading responsibility.

When the Pittsburgh-West became properly protected with Irby's safeguards, of course, a night operator could pound his ear on the company's time with a clear conscience.

So, in the deep darkness before dawn of a January morning, Austin worked mysteriously by lantern light in front of an Ohio station where he was just finishing a week's fill-in for the regular man there who had slept on the job not wisely but too well. If the night operator had delayed a passenger train with that semaphore trustingly left standing at "Danger!" the emergency man could have had a full two weeks to perfect his plans—but it merely was a fast freight that stopped until the indignant conductor and engineer stormed the office and aroused the sleeping sentinel.

Inventor Irby carried a ladder to a telegraph pole across the tracks, mounted it and carefully ascertained with a tape-line the correct height at which to attach a heavy guy wire. He strung it directly across the rails and securely fastened the other end to the iron awning of the station platform.

After all was taut he stood in the exact center of the west track and, with a string thrown over the guy wire, verified his previous measurement.

"That will just about get the hook!" he said aloud to the eastern sky that by now was beginning faintly to lighten. "It is 5 A.M. Uhuh!

"In thirty minutes from now I'll prove that my little, old device is perfect. The railroad presidents will monkey with me, eh? Dog-gone 'em—and that man Unghard, too!"

But Austin would have been less complacent had he known that his old enemy, General Ill Luck, was about to start a drive. His new friend, the engineer, had properly equipped the engine-cab of No. 5 with a meat hook affixed to the roof and attached to a bell-cord leading to an emergency valve on the air line.

That was entirely against regulations, but little enough to do for the lad that only recently had saved the man's life with a coal bucket warning.

The engineer's remaining favor was to check speed to about ten miles an hour as he reached a certain Ohio station so that the throwing on of the brakes would not send the trustful passengers bumping against the head-boards of their Pullman berths. It was quite simple, and there were to be two brief toots on the whistle to say that all was well for the imminent experiment.

But at midnight when that grateful engineer mounted to the cabin at the Allegheny roundhouse, preparatory to taking his engine across to Pittsburgh to hook onto the westbound, extra fare, vestibuled train, he was not at all complacent. The old yardmaster tried to rally him.

"You won't be so nervous," he said, "after the stork has been to your house as many times as it's been to mine. You'll beat the old bird by getting back from Crestville before the great event, all right, never fear. Cheer up, my boy; it might be only a girl at that!"

The yardmaster went into his office to answer the telephone, and in another half-minute hurried out to swing down the huge engine with his lantern.

"I lose!" he yelled when he overtook the waiting engineer. "It's a boy! Your wife's mother is on the phone and thinks you better come home. So do I.

"I've a man who can take out your run if he will—Wild Bob Owens. He's asleep in the 'Y.' I'll wake him and you try to make him see reason."

Mr. Owens, after being pounded and shaken into consciousness in the railroad Y. M. C. A. rest-room near by, was at

first profanely opposed to going on duty. He was not due to take out an engine for another six hours and he wouldn't go and that was all there was to it in vitriolic language from the first wakeful breath.

But this was before he understood the great event that had occurred in the life of a brother engineer.

"Why didn't you say so?" Wild Bob then mildly demanded of the yardmaster, the Y. M. C. A. night clerk, the call-boy, and the excited new father. "Of course, I'll go. Darn it!"

"Thanks, old man!" the regular engineer exclaimed, gratefully. "I'll do the same for you some time."

The others present shouted with amusement; Mr. Owens being by nature, prejudice, and oft-declared sentiments, a confirmed bachelor. He swore again, but embarrassedly, raced to the engine and threw over the throttle until she fairly danced on the rails before taking hold.

And when the vestibuled train came off the long hill toward Inventor Irby's lurking self-stopper, Wild Bob was hitting her up to a seventy-mile gait. The guilty confederate, his first-born completely occupying every thought, had neglected to warn this self-scrificing substitute about the hidden meat hook and the secret bell-rope.

At five thirty Operator Irby saw the electric head-light approaching from the east and about a mile away. He smiled happily to himself.

Thirty seconds later two long, insane whistlings demanded that the red semaphore be turned to white, and even as the boy obeyed the summons the grin left his face.

"Dog-gone!" he muttered, "that doesn't sound right!"

He was fascinated by the onrushing head-light that never slackened a wheel's turn, and when realization came that something was radically wrong somewhere it was too late to throw the signal back to "Danger!" to slow down the train. No. 5 thundered past the station—but she did not thunder very far, considering her initial speed.

Pretty blue showers of sparks flew from every wheel until they were locked in a dead stop. Austin made a dazed calculation that her tail lights were not more than a half-mile west of him, and he was a good guesser.

He hurried out to the rails and gazed in awe at his guy wire. Swinging above the center of the near track was a metal something attached to a length of rope that depended from a hook.

"It worked!" Austin agreed, in nervous exultation, with himself. "But why the dickens doesn't No. 5 go on?"

Down the west track he saw a lantern jigging in the gray dawn as if its possessor were on the run. With a sudden accession of caution he swiftly disconnected the station end of the guy wire and tossed it all beyond view across the tracks.

The runner was the portly, gold-braided conductor himself

"Notify DI," he commanded, puffingly, "that we blew out an air valve and can't get the wheels unlocked. He'd better send another engine from the nearest point to back us out and run around our locomotive. Tell the despatcher this is costing us a thousand dollars an hour in rebated fares."

That was a gross exaggeration, but the conductor just had come from an interview with Wild Bob Owens and he felt the need of large expressions, and was not himself a profane man

"Why—why—" stammered Operator Irby, "I thought I saw something bounding along the rails just after you passed. It might have been the air valve! It—it rolled that way—" he added, pointing eastward.

"I'll look," the conductor announced, without enthusiasm. "You tell DI what I said. Hurry!"

He proceeded up-track with his silver lantern, quartering the rails like a bird dog.

Austin entered the office, but in another minute slipped out across the tracks and cut loose from the bell-rope that precious metal something. He barely had time to throw it onto the road-bed down the track when the conductor returned.

"Wire trouble; can't raise DI!" the boy declared, sympathetically. "Let's look in the other direction for that valve."

It was not hard to find now and once

more the lantern went jigging, this time in what was nearly daylight.

At 6 A.M. the rear brakeman had strolled back as far as the station. He repeated to the distrait emergency operator and the interested day man, who just then came on duty, exactly what Engineer Owens said about Inventor Westinghouse's air-brake system.

"I'd give my right eye," the trainman commented, feelingly, "if I could talk like Wild Bob! That man sure does know how to express himself and it's all straight cussing in the English language—and him without a college education, too!"

When the engine finally shrieked for the brakeman to come in he sprinted away like a champion half-miler, but Austin gazed despairingly at the clock.

"Six twenty-five!" he remarked, bitterly, to the day man. "That brakie runs like a darned old ice-wagon!"

And to himself he whispered, woefully: "It 'll cost the company a thousand beans before she gets rolling!"

At that moment, however, it was not the Pittsburgh-West's money loss that distressed him, but the sad fact that his self-stopping device was entirely too perfect for Railway America. As an offset for its deadly efficiency and for the protection of traffic after the blow fell, he would have to invent a supplementary self-starter of superhuman intelligence.

He had heard of an automaton that played marvelous chess. Why not construct a mechanical mechanic to be carried as part of every engine's equipment? Press a spring and it would take an air valve out of its metal pocket—and No. 5 wouldn't have been delayed more than a minute!

"It's a good thing this delay can't be charged to the engineer," the day operator observed, "or he'd have to pay the company's loss. That's the new rule."

"Aw, how do they figure that?" Austin demanded as fear abruptly seized him.

"Why, it cost the night man here three dollars and fifty cents for stopping that fast freight; it's ten dollars for a through passenger train all estimated as wear and tear on the machinery," was the illuminating reply. "So, on that basis, if a valve hadn't blown out accidentally some one would be fined a nice, round thousand dollars. The road would keep it out of his salary, so much a month, I guess."

Former Inventor Irby stood for several minutes staring dumbly through the window at the tail lights of the extra fare train until they faded rapidly into the misty west. He was panic-stricken.

"One thousand dollars' fine!" he exclaimed, mentally. "Granny and Agnes would just about starve while I paid it off. That will never do! I can't stay on the Pittsburgh-West, that's certain—and I wonder if the road could have me arrested if I went to work somewhere else?"

Then he pulled himself together, sat down beside the day man and craftily urged him into his favorite topic, Canada, the hospitable—which also was remote enough to be the haven of fugitives. The older operator had spent several vacations there, hunting and fishing, and he was eloquent about the moose and the maskinonge.

But Austin was more thrilled to learn, through careful questioning, that telegraphers were paid "big money" on the Canadian Pacific; that transportation was easily arranged, and that the day man himself would jump at the chance to go North if he wasn't tied down here by free room and board with his parents.

"Why, the trapping alone up there would double the salary!" he declared. "I've heard of an op who caught a black fox and sold the pelt for an even thousand dollars."

"Where was this?" the boy demanded, eagerly.

He made a mental note of the Ontario village mentioned. His spirit was serene now. The Pittsburgh-West was to lose its child operator because of a fool rule, but he would return—perhaps within a month—with a beautiful skin to hand to the company as payment in full for that fine.

Austin assumed that thousand dollar black foxes were partial to a particular section, not knowing that the coloration is accidental in what otherwise would have been twenty five-dollar red foxes.

Six hours later he reached his home, hav-

ing traveled thither on his annual pass, but evading conversation with railroaders as if they were officers of the law and he a fugitive from justice. He told Granny Mowrey of the irresistible demand for telegraphers in Ontario—and well he knew how to silence through her loyal Irish heart all inquiries directed toward his future movements.

"English capitalists have bought the Pittsburgh-West," he said, which was a fact several decades old in regard to stock control but news to the little, old lady, "and it's no place for a white man to work now!

"I'm leaving without notice and I don't want 'em to know where I've gone. They might queer me with the Canadian government, you know, Granny dear!"

"Ye hear, Agnes Helene?" Granny demanded, excitedly, of her granddaughter. "If anny one comes here askin' for th' lad, call me an' Oi'll pour th' tay-kittle av boilin' wather on him.

"Ah-h-h-h, thim English blaggards av landlords an' stock-owner-r-r-rs; they grind th' face av th' poor even in Amerikey! 'Tis moighty long arrums th' r-r-rich have whin they're afther yer pocket-book, Oi dunno!"

Austin promised his make-believe sister a mink neck-piece, at least. He would have suggested black fox, but that rare animal was reserved for the Pittsburgh-West.

("Fatheads" will be continued in next week's Railroad Man's Magazine. Austin has some exciting times ahead of him in Canada. You will want to read about them.—Ed.)

IT'S THE OLD STORY, MATES!

BY FRANK BLIGHTON.

SALLIE possessed much sentimentality.
Sam, her sweetheart, adored practicality.
They discussed, pro and con, these topics one night,
And, at the conclusion, each started to write.

Sallie gave Sam
This Utopian slam:

"Life is short, so make it pleasant,
Think of nothing but the Present.
For the Past we leave behind us
And the Future may not find us."

And Sam, with a rally,
Shot this one at Sally:

"Life is short, so make it busy,
Hustle till your brain is dizzy.
Where the Past and Future join,
Do some business—salt some coin."

Sallie emerged from her sentimentality,
Saw a great light and embraced a reality.
In this practical age Father Time doesn't dally.
Need I say, in conclusion, that Sam married Sally?

THE KING'S MAN.

BY W. HANSON DURHAM.

Barney O'Neil, of the Mounted Police, Rides Into the Heart of a Girl of the Cypress Hills.

JANET, the daughter of old Angus McLeod, stood in the open door of her father's cabin, looking out across the stumpy clearing into the brown October woods beyond, where she saw the last fading flash of a scarlet-colored coat.

The gorgeous gayness of the fall had given way to the promise of an early northern winter. Already the streams were ice-locked and the first flurry of snow filled the air. The dark spruce beyond the clearing loomed grim in their own somber silence against the gray, leaden sky.

The girl turned and closed the door slowly—almost reluctantly and stood for a moment in the center of the cabin floor beside the plank-top table and looked again at the cheap post-card photograph she held in her hand. It was the almost-boyish face of a man in the scarlet tunic of the mounted police; a face from which steady, blue Irish eyes seemd to look squarely and approvingly into her own gray eyes.

A fire smoldered in the fireplace at the further end of the cabin. A pile of fur blanket-robes in the rude bunk across from the table was where old Angus slept. A pole ladder led to the loft overhead—to Janet's bedroom

The girl sank slowly, with all the grace of budding womanhood, upon the rude bench beside the table, and, pushing aside the battered dishes there, placed the photograph against the side of a cracked teacup. With her elbows resting upon the top of the table, her chin cupped in the hollow of her hands, she sat and gazed steadily into the eyes of Barney O'Neil, the King's man.

O'Neil had given Janet his picture less than ten minutes ago, when he had left her standing outside her father's cabin door. A traveling photographer at the post had taken it a few days before and—well, O'Neil had given it to Janet.

Perhaps it was because they had been such good friends, or because she always had a smile for him when he called at her father's cabin door as he rode past on his patrol.

Or, perhaps, it was because that friendship had grown into something greater and more lasting now—a question asked and answered and a promise given in exchange for the photograph.

A step sounded softly on the snow outside and the door opened. Quickly Janet pushed the photograph aside among the dishes and sprang to her feet and faced the man who entered and closed the door.

A short, squat half-breed, Pierre, who had so often gone with her father, old Angus McLeod, in his many mysterious missions among the Cypress Hills, smiled leeringly at her.

"Ah, Janet! Yo' fader—he no here?" he asked, peering about. "Whar he go—w'en he come w'at?"

Janet slipped her hand slowly along the top of the plank-top table and covered the photograph with her palm, and shook her head. She shrank visibly from the devouring eyes of the man and wished her father would come.

The half-breed leaned forward a little closer and fixing his shifting eyes full upon her gloatingly, gasped

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* But you air ze fine gal, ze pret' dot'r of ole Angus McLeod Some day I make marrie wiz you—w'at

say, ma Janet?" and, laughing, he advanced with admiring eyes and suddenly slipped his arm about the waist of the girl

There was a flash of anger in the gray eyes of McLeod's daughter, and forgetting in her anger that which she wished to hide from the eyes of the half-breed, she lifted her hand from the top of the table and struck him once across the mouth and sprang quickly aside

A fleck of blood showed on the bearded lips of the half-breed; his eyes gleamed in sudden surprise and anger as he turned toward her and then he saw it the photograph, face upward, there upon the table In an instant he held it in his hand and glared wrathfully at it

"*Sacré!*" he snarled. "Ze King's man! You have it—ze phot'graf ze picture of heem—ze King's man!

"Whar you git?" he demanded fiercely "Whar you git?"

Again, forgetting her fear of the man in her fear of what he might do to her treasure, Janet sprang forward like a wild beast in defense of its young. She succeeded in clutching the photograph in her hand and wrestled with him for its possession. But he grasped her by the slender wrist and forced it back painfully until the tears filled her eyes and the card, crumpled and torn, fell to the floor. He set his foot heavily upon it and holding off her angry attack, he cried crazily:

"*Nom de Dieu!* Ze King's man! Whar you git?" he demanded again. "Mebbe you t'ink you make marrie wiz heem w'at? You no lak marrie wiz me—no.

"Mebbe me keel heem me. Mebbe you tell heem w'at he lak for to know who run in ze whisky an sell ze Injun w'at?

"No! Ba gar! You no tell heem zat—zat you' fader, ole Angus McLeod, do zat—wiz me—I help heem, 'cause you 'fraid for you' fader w'at? Mebbe I no keel him mighty queeck if you make promis' for to marrie wiz me, Pierre Labade—w'at."

"You you dare say that that to me, you half-breed renegade!" gasped the girl angrily, half fearfully. "You dare! I'm not afraid of you or your threats.

"Go and tell them to my father, Angus McLeod, and see what he will do to you. Go and tell the King's man, too, if you dare, and tell him," she added, still angrily, "what you have said to me.

"If you don't," she went on wildly, "I shall!" and she rubbed her smarting wrist and her eyes flashed fearlessly, defiantly into his as she spoke.

The eyes of the half-breed narrowed. He realized only too well the meaning of the girl's own threat turned upon him, which would not only mean the vengeance of old Angus himself if he betrayed him, but the sudden termination of the whisky trade to the Indians, which he had found so profitable, and his own probable apprehension as well and, angrily, he lifted his foot and kicked the photograph across the floor into the fireplace, and, turning abruptly about, opened the door.

"Bah! W'at I care. I no 'fraid. I go fine—I tell heem, ze King's man—who run in ze whisky and sell ze Injun, an' I go mighty queeck for hide in ze beeg woods whar he no come—he no cotch me.

"I tell heem—you see!" and as he spoke he strode angrily out and slammed the door behind him and made his way across the little clearing toward the somber silence of the spruces.

Janet heard his angry threat and her heart filled with a sudden fear for her father, now that she knew the full meaning of his many mysterious missions among the hills.

That Pierre would do as he had threatened she did not doubt. He would even sacrifice his own safety by exposing her father and take his chances of escaping his own punishment by quick flight. The blow was about to fall.

She had half feared something like this for a long time, and she sobbed silently as she drew the charred fragment of the prized photograph from the edge of the fire, and crouching there brushed it carefully and held it hard against her trembling lips.

Old Angus found her there an hour later when he returned and, in calmer mind, she told him everything the coming of O'Neil and of their love and of Pierre and his threat to betray him to O'Neil, the King's man.

"An' the mon wull betray me. The dirty Judas! Did he say thot to you, Janet, ma lass—did he say them wurds to you, what you have tuld me?" he asked slowly, almost ponderously in his wrath.

The girl nodded her head silently. Old Angus, her father, stood there with his back to the fire and looked down at her, his old eyes glowing strangely.

"Janet, ma lass," he said suddenly, almost abruptly, "yer have tuld me that aboot Pierre, the betrayin' blackg'ard, an' I dinna fear so muckle fer meself, but how is ut wi' yerself and him, Barney O'Neil, the King's mon?

"If I tho't the mon meant yer a mischief, I'd slay him wi' ma own hond, I wud thot! What say yer, ma lass, is all well atween yer an' him?"

"Yes, father, all is well," and, as she spoke, she looked her father full in the eye and then she turned slowly aside and slipping the charred photograph carefully into her bosom, she began to dish up her father's simple supper from the fire.

"'Tis wull!" responded old Angus thoughtfully "I ha' dun wull, muckle wull wi' the trade an' I maun do no mure, ma lass, but ut was all for yer—ut all, yer ken that a' now?"

The girl nodded her head understandingly, and then her father went on slowly:

"But what wull he do, the King's mon, Barney O'Neil? Wull he forsake yer anow, think yer, ma lass, if trouble coomes aboot yer father—aboot tha trade, yer ken? Wha' think yer aboot that?"

The girl made no reply. She could not answer her father's questioning. She had never thought of it that way before anyway.

She had felt herself too sure of Barney O'Neil's love, perhaps, and now, for the first time, she felt herself almost doubting, her confidence slipping and herself facing the situation squarely.

She now knew what meant her father's many mysterious missions, days of absence in the hills. He had been running in whisky and selling it to the Indians, and now Pierre meant to betray him to O'Neil, her lover and the King's man, who represented the law.

Would O'Neil still feel the same toward her when he learned that it was her father who had defied and broken the laws which he had sworn to uphold and to enforce.

Would it make any difference, she wondered. She feared it would but, somehow, her first and greatest fear was not altogether for herself and what it all might mean to her, but for her father, and to conceal her own anxiety, she had made no reply to her father's question, but placed his food upon the table and pushed the rude bench up a little closer and silently motioned for him to sit and eat.

The old man stepped forward and, thrusting the bench aside with his foot, strode over to his bunk and took down his holstered revolver from the peg and stood looking at it thoughtfully. Then without a word, he replaced the weapon carefully, and drawing a sheathed knife from its loop in the belt, slipped it silently into his pocket and turned toward the door.

"I'm thinkin' tha mon, Pierre, wull bother ye no mure, ma lass," he said significantly. "I'm aleavin' ye tha goon, so ye wull be no wi'out a weapon whin I'm gone. Ye dinna ken if ye'll aneed ut or no, but ut's tha—tha same, ma lass.

"Dinna forgit!" he added quietly, and before Janet could make reply or even grasp his meaning, old Angus had closed the door behind him silently and was well across the little clearing, when she looked, stalking angrily through the falling snow, on the trail of Pierre, the half-breed.

They met well in the woods where only the somber spruces and startled snow-rabbits saw the struggle between old Angus and Pierre, the half breed. It was a struggle of the strength of youth against the strength of age, and when it was over, Pierre slipped stealthily off the trail into the deeper darkness of the woods and left a bleeding body lying there in the trampled snow in which they had fought; the blood from the knife thrust in the breast of old Angus slowly staining scarlet the snow in which he lay.

Back in the little cabin Janet crouched before the smoldering embers of the fire Her father's supper on the table had long

since grown cold and she had forgotten to eat anything herself while she waited

The twilight deepened a little in the cabin and the chill crept closer as the fire burned lower upon the hearth. Janet never stirred, but crouched with wide-open staring eyes straight into the fire until she heard a sound outside the cabin door. Then she arose, relieved at the supposed return of her father and threw an armful of wood upon the fire and hurridly unbarred the door and stood peering out through the falling snow.

A man in the scarlet coat of the mounted police had dismounted from his horse and was stepping toward her. It was O'Neil on his way back to the post. Her father had not returned and Janet's fears began to grow suddenly greater for him.

"Ah, Janet," greeted O'Neil, as he stood before her, wiping the snow from his eyes. "Snowing—what? I couldn't get past, you know, without stopping to see how things were with you.

"Is your father inside—have you told him anything yet?" he asked, almost anxiously, and he took her hand in his.

"Yes, Barney," she answered quickly. "I have told him all –everything. He said it is well, but—" she went on fearfully, "he has gone, and I'm so afraid for him, Barney."

As she spoke she began to sob half chokingly and bowed her head wearily against the scarlet-coated shoulder of the King's man. Then slowly, word by word, aided by his own quick questioning and her agonized answers, O'Neil managed to make out her meaning and the truth from her and the cause of her fears for her father, Angus McLeod.

"I suspected the half-breed, Pierre," remarked O'Neil slowly, "but I wasn't quite so sure about your father being in it, and now I know. It's too bad! God knows I'm sorry for you– and for him

"Janet! This is awful, don't you know. I'm almost sorry you ever told me. What can I do?" he demanded, half desperately.

The girl moaned a little in her own misery and clung close to him, and then she straightened suddenly upright and drawing back she stood and looked at him and asked abruptly.

"You suspected– you were not– quite sure, and so you came here to find out—to spy upon him—to make me learn to love you that you might tempt me to betray my own father. Thank God, Barney O'Neil, I never knew that until to-night, and now that I do know it—"

"No, not that, Janet," he muttered "You are wrong mistaken there, don't you know. I knew there was two of them in this business.

"Pierre I was sure of, but that the other man was your father, old Angus McLeod, I never knew until you told me so, yourself."

"Well, now that you know, what are you going to do about it?" she asked calmly, but anxiously

"What am I going to do?" he repeated slowly after her. "What am I going to do? Why, Janet," he answered. "I am going to do my duty, don't you know, as I see it, as I have sworn to do.

"What else can I do? What else would you have me do?" he demanded almost fiercely. "This is hard enough, God knows, without you trying to tempt me to —to forget."

"He—he is my father!" gasped the girl sobbingly.

"I know it. He is your father— that's what makes it hard, don't you know. But it is my—duty," he replied reluctantly. "It is your father and—my duty," he added suddenly.

"I cannot forget either, Janet," he cried hoarsely. "Can't you see? Oh, won't you understand how it is?"

She nodded her head.

"But you will not –you won't harm him, Barney," she begged brokenly. "He is an old man. No matter what he has done, he is still my father

"It was all for me he did it. Remember that. If you care anything for me, you will not forget that, Barney."

"I'll—not forget," he said softly.

"And you won't harm him, will you, Barney?" she pleaded pathetically.

"No! I promise you that!" he replied readily.

"Then go now—quick! Find him before it is too late—before he finds Pierre. You know what it means if they meet on

the trail there will be murder done. Go!" and, as she spoke, she lifted her face to his entreatingly, her eyes full of tears.

He bent and kissed her lips, which were cold, and then she pushed him hurriedly toward his horse.

"But, Janet," he said hesitatingly. "Tell me—will this—is this going to make any difference between us—you and me?"

But the girl had gone. She had turned suddenly and slipped back into the cabin and stood there with the partly closed door between them.

O'Neil mounted his horse and rode hurriedly away out across the little clearing through the falling snow along the almost obliterated trail of old Angus McLeod, and as he disappeared among the spruces, Janet closed the cabin door and went back and crouched down before the fire again and waited.

In the shelter of the spruces the trail of old Angus was plain enough as it followed the lesser tracks of Pierre. The twilight was beginning to deepen into early darkness, which grew greater as O'Neil followed the trail deeper into the woods.

That there was likely to be murder done if old Angus succeeded in overtaking the half-breed on the trail ahead, O'Neil did not doubt, and he urged his horse on. The trail was still open enough to follow even in the deepening darkness, but in another half hour or less it would be impossible unless he followed it on foot—so he hurried on.

There was a cathedral-like stillness all about him, broken only by the soft sighing of the night-wind through the swaying spruces and the steady swish of his horse's feet through the fresh-fallen snow.

A fox darted suddenly across the trail ahead, and slipped silently from sight among the shadows.

Somewhere, just beyond, the quick yelp of a hungry timber-wolf was answered by another of its kind near at hand, and his horse snorted suddenly and stopped. A touch of the spur forced him on a few steps further and then he stopped again abruptly and reared, snorting and shying at an irregular, snow-shrouded shape there in the snow beside the trail. The wolf skulking there among the shadows lifted its nose in the air and howled once, and then slipped swiftly away.

O'Neil dismounted and led his horse forward. Trembling, the beast followed almost unwillingly. The eyes of the wolf gleamed, glittering greenishly, from the darkness beyond and then was gone.

O'Neil prodded the snow-covered shape with his foot and heard a groan. Striking a match, he cupped it with his hands to shield its feeble flare from the wind, and looked closer.

All about him in the snow he saw the signs of a struggle. He knelt down and carefully brushed the freshly fallen snow from the face of the man lying there, face upward. Lighting another match, he looked again. It was the face of old Angus McLeod that he saw, and from the knife thrust there in his breast the blood had oozed until it had congealed in the cold. His heart still beat feebly.

It was all plain enough. The old Scotsman had overtaken the half-breed on the trail and they had fought and the older man had been left bleeding and dying. O'Neil lifted the unconscious form across his saddle and, steadying his plunging horse, managed to mount. Turning, he rode back with his burden along the trail toward the cabin where Janet was waiting.

Crouching in the shelter of a low stunted spruce, Pierre, the half-breed, wiped his knife blade upon his sleeve and listened.

He had killed a man! His hand still trembled and his teeth chattered not with the cold as he listened. The sob of the wind through the swaying spruces about him seemed to him like the sobbing of dying men.

A wolf snarled suddenly nearby and he started quickly to his feet and staggered almost blindly on again, hardly heeding where he went, but leaving an erratic trail which he knew only too well would be followed when his work was known, unless the snow continued to fall for a sufficient time to cover it for him.

By morning he would be far away—swallowed in the big woods of the north where the posts were few and far between—where white men rarely went.

For a brief moment the chances seemed all in his favor, and then he suddenly remembered that he had no sledge, no provisions and no weapon aside from his knife, and he well knew the folly of an attempted escape without the necessary preparations.

"*Mon Dieu!*" He had killed a man with his knife! "Ze pore ole fule!" he mouthed mutteringly. "Janet, she tell heem wot I say."

Suddenly he stopped. He had left Janet alone in the cabin. Old Angus was no longer to be feared, and in his cabin was food and weapons—and there was Janet.

Yes, he would return to the cabin of old Angus and make proper preparations for his flight, and when he went up into the north, into the big woods he would force the girl to accompany him.

She would drag his sledge and make camp for him at night and prepare his food. Yes, all was well, and he grinned behind his fanged teeth as he circled about and came back to the edge of the clearing and looked out across through the early darkness toward the little cabin.

He saw, through the single window, the faint, fitful gleam of the fire in the fireplace within, and saw the smoke curling lazily upward from the squat stone chimney, and he knew Janet was still there. But he drew back in the shelter of the spruces and watched.

The door of the cabin was open and the crouching man there in the edge of the clearing saw against the gleam of the fire within, the form of a man the King's man —O'Neil, and Janet, standing there. He saw the arms of the girl about the neck of the King's man. He saw their lips meet—and the fanged teeth clenched tightly as he watched the King's man mount his horse and ride rapidly off across the clearing into the woods beyond.

Now Janet was alone there in the cabin. The King's man was gone and her father was no longer to be reckoned with. Pierre sprang from the shadows and ran swiftly across the clearing and threw his weight against the cabin door

It swung open and he staggered almost headlong into the cabin. Janet was crouching there beside the bunk, but she leaped to her feet and faced him fearfully, inquiringly.

"You you murderer!" she gasped. "What do you want —how dare you come here now? Go!"

And as she spoke she pointed past him to the open door.

"*Sacre!* No," snarled the half-breed savagely. "I come for ze grub and ze gun, an' I tak' you, ma Janet. Ze King's man he no have

"Me see -me. You kees he kess. I keel him fo' that me. You see. He no have. I keel before."

Janet stood, still facing him. Somehow she no longer felt any fear for herself from the man before her, but for her father. Stepping suddenly forward she tried to force the half-breed back through the open door, but the man laughed almost shrilly as, thrusting her easily aside and swinging the door shut with his foot, he stepped into the cabin.

"I go mighty queeck, you bet. Ze King's man—he no git me for sure. I tak' ze grub an' ze gun an' you, ma Janet. We go fer hide in ze beeg woods—mak' run. He no fine

"You get ze gun an' ze grub an' mak' ready —mighty queeck!" and, as he spoke, he seized her by the shoulder and shook her savagely and swung her violently about into the room.

She staggered and almost fell headlong against the unconscious form of her father there in the bunk, half hidden by the shadows and the pile of fur blanket robes about him. Standing over her, the half-breed raised his fist as if to strike, but the girl tottered to her feet and shrunk back against the side of the bunk but made no movement to obey.

And then he saw him there the unconscious man in the bunk.

"*Sacré—le diable!*" he snarled, starting back in sudden surprise. He crossed himself hurriedly and then looked closer and was sure of what he saw, and, as he looked, his hand stole slowly back toward his belted knife

His bearded lips drew back and showed

his teeth in an evil grin, and then he sprang forward, but Janet was before him.

She snatched a smoldering stick from the fireplace, and, swinging about, thrust it, blazing, full in the face of the half breed. With a string of oaths he reeled back and covered his face with his hands.

There was the strong smell of scorched flesh and burning hair in the cabin, and then he leaped forward and seized her savagely by the wrists and bent them abruptly backward. The blazing brand fell to the floor and flickered and went out.

His evil eyes sneered into hers, his burned and bleeding lips drew back in a hideous grin. The girl cringed and bent beneath his greater strength and her face went white with pain.

There was a slight movement in the bunk beneath the pile of fur blanket robes there, but neither saw the glazing eyes of old Angus fixed upon them. The eyes swept swiftly from them and rested upon the butt of the holstered revolver hanging there on the peg beside the head of the bunk.

A trembling old hand, brown and wrinkled, crept slowly from beneath the fur blankets and reached toward the weapon, well within reach. But the fast failing strength of the old Scotsman flickered and failed him and the trembling hand fell weakly back upon the blankets—but he continued to stare with wild, helpless, glazing eyes from the shadows.

"*Diablement!* You burn me wiz ze fire w'at'" snarled the half-breed furiously, gnashing his fanged teeth. "Ba gar, I fex you fer zat – me.

"You see. Mebbe you t'ink you no go 'long wiz me w'at'" he demanded desperately, and, as he spoke, he bent the wrist further back.

The look of agonized pain grew greater in the girl's eyes, but she met his gaze unflinchingly and made no answer, but suffered and struggled silently. If she could endure it and struggle a little longer—anything to keep the frenzied half-breed's attention fixed full upon herself and away from her father there in the bunk.

She wondered vaguely why O'Neil didn't come. He was sure to trail the half-breed back to the cabin through the fresh fallen snow, if it had not already covered his tracks. Surely, he must come soon, and she clenched her teeth tightly together and faced the man still fearlessly—for herself. She could not speak, the agony of the grip upon her wrists was too great.

The half-breed laughed leeringly into her face and then bent her right wrist a little more. He still grinned grimly as he saw the pain grow greater in her eyes, and then he snarled again.

"Mebbe you no lak eh? Mebbe you say you go now—al right w'at?" and forcing the tortured, twisted wrist still further back, he waited, still smiling, for his answer.

It did not come.

The lips of the half-breed drew back snarlingly again. The muscles of his right arm stiffened and swelled slowly—and the wrist of the girl bent still further back beneath his strength and still he smiled.

There was a sudden snap! The lips of the girl went even whiter; she made a little muttered moan as the half-breed cursed and flung her violently aside, and then he smiled again as he saw her crouching there beside the bunk, clutching her broken wrist in her left hand and staring bewilderedly at it.

"Ba gar! You no fite me no mo—me. You burn me no mo wiz ze stick w'at. *Sacre!* I fix heem!" and, as he spoke, he seized her savagely by the shoulder and swung her to her feet and thrust her aside. Then drawing his knife, he turned back toward the bunk.

O'Neil had long since reached the spot where he had found old Angus, and from there, with the aid of numerous matches, he was able to pick up the trail of the man he sought. The snow continued to fall fitfully but had not as yet completely covered the tracks of the half-breed, which he found grew to be more distinct as he advanced, leading his horse, further into the woods.

He now knew that his man was not far ahead, from the freshness of his tracks in the snow, and then, to his sudden surprise, he found he had followed the tracks in a circuit back to the edge of the clearing.

He found the spot where Pierre had crouched and watched the cabin door, and his heart feared within him for the safety of Janet inside. He left his horse and, step-

ping closer to the door, listened—and then he threw the door wide open and stepped inside

He saw Janet crouching against the wall, her left hand clutching at the right wrist. He heard a snarling oath as the half-breed turned back from the bunk and saw him standing there.

He saw the sudden gleam of a knife-blade in the firelight as he reached for his revolver, but already the clutching fingers of the half-breed were at his throat.

The eyes of the man in the bunk watched the struggle. His glazing glare followed every movement of the men. In his helplessness, he saw the flickering knife point as it poised to strike downward, and again he reached his trembling hand toward the butt of the holstered revolver. But the effort was too great and his hand again fell back weakly upon the blanket.

The hand of the King's man grasped the wrist of the knife-hand of Pierre and barely held the point from his throat as the sudden strength of the half-breed bore down heavily upon him and forced him backward over the edge of the plank-top table.

Janet, helpless in her own agony, shrank further back against the wall and stood staring with fearful eyes at the struggle.

The table creaked loudly under the weight of the King's man as the half-breed forced him further back over the edge. His eyes stared wide open, straight up into the frenzied, furious face of Pierre Labade, the half-breed.

He saw the snarling lips, scorched, seared and bleeding, and felt his panting, fetid breath full in his face. Janet started suddenly forward. Stooping, she snatched a blazing brand from the fireplace and stole swiftly up behind the half-breed, but a quick backward shove from his heavy foot sent her reeling and staggering back against the side of the bunk, where she sank in a helpless heap and moaned in agony.

The glazing, appealing eyes of the man in the bunk sought hers in vain. She saw nothing now but the uplifted knife point as it began to sink slowly, inch by inch, beneath the steady strain of the swollen muscles, until its point seemed to almost touch the exposed, straining throat of O'Neil.

It was now simply a silent, steady strain of swollen muscles—of straining strength against strength, broken only by the men's labored breathing and the protesting creaking of the table beneath their combined weight.

A smoldering ember snapped loudly in the fireplace and rolled out onto the floor, and then died out in a little smudge of smoke. The burning eyes of the man in the bunk seemed fixed on the straining shapes over the table top.

The knife point, glittering in the flickering light of the fire, seemed to fascinate him as he watched it, and then he moved a little.

Slowly, his right hand, still trembling, reached out toward the butt of the holstered revolver, but it fell weakly, still without sufficient strength, back upon the blankets.

Once more he lifted his hand feebly, and with an effort which seemed to be his last, reached further until his fumbling fingers finally found and gropingly grasped the butt of the weapon. Drawing it slowly, steadily toward him, he sank back and, resting the muzzle over the edge of the bunk, pulled at the trigger

There was no report. His fast failing strength was not sufficient for the effort He stared helplessly and saw the sudden triumphant gleam growing in the eyes of the half-breed as he began to force the knife-point slowly downward into the throat of O'Neil, the King's man, and then, somehow, he managed to steady the wavering muzzle over the edge of the bunk again—and aimed.

With the last convulsion of life within him old Angus McLeod pressed the trigger

There was a flash and a report which seemed to fill the little cabin. The smoking revolver slipped slowly from his fingers and fell clattering to the floor beside the bunk and the lifeless hand of the old Scotsman hung limply over the edge.

There was a snarling half scream of agony, and when the smoke had lifted Janet saw Pierre lying in a huddled heap upon the floor beside the table, while O'Neil, the King's man, stood upright, clutching at his throbbing throat.

SUPERSTITIOUS WILLIAM.

BY J. W. EARP.

A Shack on William's Drag Had to Be a Professor of Hoodooism to Get by with the Con.

CONDUCTOR WILSON came into the yard office, looked at the extra-board, and departed as quietly as he had come. The fireman squinted after the retreating figure and drawled:

"Without a doubt, there goes the nuttiest con on the division. I'd rather brake for any other man than him, if I were a shack. How they manage to get along without knocking his block off is more than I can understand. About the first time he popped off to me I'd slip a sleep-producer to his jaw that would put him into the hospital for temporary repairs."

"Aw, bugs!" snorted the new brakeman "The crazier they are, the better I like 'em. I don't care how crazy they are, so long as they aren't superstitious.

"But them boys with the sign-pulling stunts get my nanny and tie it to a tree. There isn't a superstitious hair in my head. I don't believe in signs or omens, good-luck or any other kind

"I've h'isted umbrellas in the house and spilled salt at the breakfast-table, without getting anything worse than a bawling out from the landlady because I hadn't paid my last month's board-bill.

"I've walked under ladders and worn my hat in the house, and I never had anything come of it. I've started away from the house, then thought of something I'd forgotten, and gone back after it, and it didn't cost me anything only a little exertion.

"I've had black cats cross my path, and I've kicked at them, and still it didn't bring me bad luck. Once, while I was in a big poker-game, I counted my money—you know they claim that's the worst kind of a bad-luck bringer—and when I found out that I had about two hundred bucks of clear velvet I up and quit the game cold.

"That's the only time in my life that I remember of quitting a game a winner. But what soured me on this superstitious biz was William Wellington.

"William was an O. R. C. over on the Union Pacific. I had just started to work there, because it had the name of being the best boomer job in the country. Two weeks' seniority meant a regular car, and two years meant promotion to the brainy class. That gives you an idea as to how swift advancement was.

"Why, there wasn't a pay-day passed but what the trainmaster would wire down to Denver to headquarters and say: 'Please send me anything that looks like a brakeman, or even looks like he wants to be a brakeman'

"Oh, it was a boomer's layout, all right, all right. They came in on the first, and blew out on the thirtieth or thirty-first. Here to-day and gone to-morrow.

"I'd been on the job just ten days when William's car came up for bids. I put mine in, and for my bravery I drew the rear end with old William.

"Up to this time I had never met him, but I didn't let that worry me any. I figured I could brake for anything that wore the O. R. C. emblem.

"I was called to make my first trip with William on an extra west. I hurried down to the crummy and began getting things in shape.

"I was just putting out the markers when William planted his feet on the hack's steps. I was whistling a rag-time tune to beat all get out, and he just raised

his hands in horror and almost cried as he said:

"'Goodness gracious, boy! Don't ever whistle while you are putting out your markers, or while lighting lamps; it's the worst kind of a bad-luck bringer. Poor old Henry Tillotson did that very trick the night they went through the Shattuck bridge and plunged down into the river.

"'The whole crew were drowned. So, please, don't ever do that again as long as you are braking for me. Understand?'

"'Oh, well,' I said, 'if that's the way you feel about it, we won't let it happen again.'

"'See that you don't,' replied William. 'It sure is a sign of bad luck.'

"'Rummy guy,' I thought, and let it go at that.

"When we left town I high balled from the left-hand side of the dog-house, because the switch was on that side and because the head shack was looking for a signal from that side. William saw me do it, and immediately dropped all work to come to me and say:

"'Please, don't ever do that again! The last time I had a brakeman do that for me we overlooked a positive meet with a second-class train, and met them on the main line.

"'One engineer and a fireman went to their eternal reward; my rear brakeman went through the cupola window, and broke his collar-bone, and I and the rest of the crew went home in an ambulance. So, please remember and don't ever do that again.'

"I promised him I wouldn't. You can believe me or not, but I was beginning to wonder what I was up against by that time.

"Over at Coaltown we stopped and set out a string of empty coal-cars and picked up loaded ones. As we pulled out of town I got to wondering how many cars we had, so I started to counting them as they pulled by me.

"'What on earth are you doing?' howled William. 'Are you counting those cars?'

"'I sure am,' I said. 'What of it?'

"'What of it?' he replied tearfully. 'You'll see later on, when we have some bad luck happen to us. Please, don't ever do that again.'

"'I had a brakeman do that once while he was braking for me, and we dropped a journal. We put twenty cars in the ditch and killed forty head of live stock. Promise me you won't ever do that again.'

"Of course I promised that I wouldn't. By that time I was beginning to think that William was a little bit daffy in his upper story.

"We arrived at the division-point all O. K.—never had a nicer or better trip in my life—but old William was still pessimistic. He was sure we would have some bad luck on the homeward trip, but we didn't. Instead, we caught a caboose-bounce and went home like a passenger-train.

"No matter what I did, or how I did it, William would predict bad luck for us. That guy had a bad-luck sign for everything.

"Finally he got on my nerves, so I traded runs with Charley Andrews. I took Charley's place on the local, and Charley took my place on the rear end with William.

"Charley was just William's kind of a brakeman. Charley carried a rabbit's foot on his watch-chain to bring him good luck; two buckeyes in each of his trouser pockets to keep the rheumatism away; two four-leaf clovers in his pocketbook, so as to always keep him square with the world; and if he met up with a black cat he would turn around three times for luck and walk backward four steps.

"Oh, Charley sure did live up to all the regulation signs, and he had an antidote for each one. But William had signs and omens that Charley had never heard of, and it wasn't long before Charley began to think there wasn't anything in this old world *but* bad luck.

"William got real angry once, and told Charley that he liked to flirt with death as well as I did. But that was before they had the *real* trip.

"They left town one night on a drag. The head brakeman got up to decorate as they pulled through the switches, and he slipped and fell off the train, and they went off without any head shack.

"The first time William missed his head man was when an air-hose blew up and drew a lung. He and Charley chained up the car without having any rear-end protection, and an extra nosed through the blocks, stopping with her pilot against the crummy's steps.

"The trainmaster was on the extra's engine, and what he didn't say to William Wellington wouldn't be worth repeating. When he wound up his little speech he made William and Charley a present of thirty brownies each, for carelessness and non-attention to the rules.

"When they got under way again William turned to Charley and said:

"'Which door did you come out of when you brought out that chain?'

"'Front one, of course,' said Charley.

"'Don't ever do that again,' said William. 'If I had known that that was what you had done, I could have prevented it by spitting on the loop of the chain and swinging it over my head. But please try to remember, and don't ever let it occur again.'

"Charley made the required promise, and old William breathed easier. They headed in to meet the night passenger-train at Presidio. When the varnished cars got by they headed right out on the main. Charley had a little trouble in getting the switch locked, and when he finally did get it locked the train was going out of sight and Charley, to his surprise, was left at the switch.

"He just planted himself there to wait for the extra he knew was close behind them.

"At the next station the order-board was red, and they stopped. For the first time William missed his rear man. He knew without being told that Charley was six miles behind him, and also that now he hadn't any shacks at all

"He hiked over to the station to see what was on the board. When he got there he found the operator lying on the floor unconscious.

"William was sure in some fix. He hadn't any brakeman, the board was red, and he couldn't go without a clearance; his train was on the main line without any flag-protection, and the operator was unconscious and couldn't do anything for him, and William isn't an operator, so he couldn't get any orders himself.

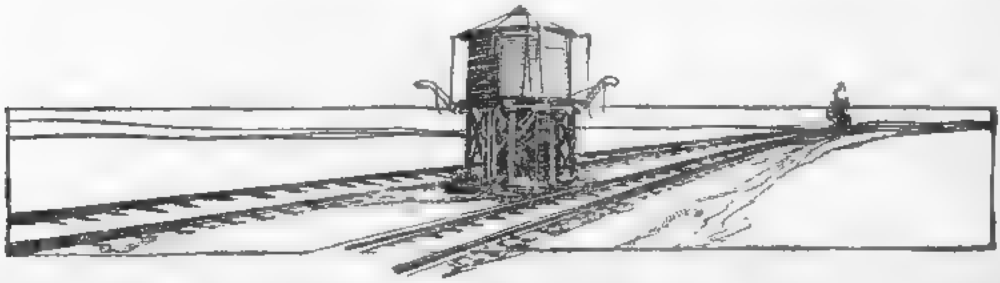
"He did the next best thing by getting his train in the clear, then he went back to wait for the operator to come around and the extra to bring old Charley into town with them.

"To this day William can't explain just why they had all that bad luck. When he was telling me about it, I told him in a joking way that perhaps Charley happened to look at the new moon over the wrong shoulder. William caught his breath and said

"'I'll bet that's just what that rumheaded son of a gun did! I'll ask him the next time I see him.'

"Of course Charley denied it, and now William was stumped for fair. Finally he and Charley split up. William said Charley wasn't a safe character to have around the caboose.

"But me! I'm off these superstitious guys for life, I am, believe me! You don't have to go around looking for trouble. No, sir. It will come around and hunt you up, every time, believe me!'"



THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN THE CITY.

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN.

The Clever Advertising Manager Puts One Over on the Rival Store—and Cupid Puts One Over on Him.

IT WAS a poor but honest shop-girl when it happened. Such things always happen sudden like

I'd lived nineteen years and hadn't ever suspected I was the prettiest girl in the city. But I am.

The advertising manager told me so, and advertising managers always tell the truth sometimes

When he sent for me I was pretty well content with the idea of working until spring and then marrying John Gregory. In fact, the prospect looked mighty good.

I thought I was a lucky girl. My head was level. But Harry Ackerman he's the ad manager invited me to have a seat and sprung the fateful news on me. Says he:

"You are the prettiest girl in the city."

"I'm not that kind of a—" I starts to tell him, when he cuts me short.

"I mean it," he says. "You have a perfect complexion, a figure that 'd put Venus to the blush, and—"

"Is this an insult or a proposal of marriage?" I demanded

"Neither," he says. "It's a compliment and a proposition."

"You'd better call in Sudie Macmillan, Mr. Ackerman, because she might listen to your proposition, but I'm engaged, I says to him, and besides, you're nutty. There's a thousand girls in this town a heap prettier than what I am."

"I know it."

"Then what 'd you go kidding me for? Think I was a softy to fall for that line of stuff?"

"I was serious My proposition is to make you the prettiest girl in this burg."

"Whadaya think you are: a human beauty parlor?"

"You don't get me," he says.

"I guess I don't. What's the answer."

"This," he says, getting right enthusiastic. "This store is getting in a bad way since Simpson and Hardwick opened up. Business has been going to the other place.

"There ain't a bit of reason for it; we carry a better line than they do, we've got a better staff of clerks, and our service is better. But they're taking our fanciest trade.

"Everybody in this store blames it on somebody else—and that somebody else is me. See?"

"Kind of. It's sort of tough on you."

With that he heaves a sigh.

"They say Tommy Carson, who's doing the advertising for Simpson & Hardwick, is a better advertising manager than I am. Know Tommy?"

"Nope. What's the matter with him?"

"He's a nice enough fellow personally. But that lets him out. He ain't in my class as an advertising manager."

"You hate yourself, don't you, Mr. Ackerman?"

"I'm going to prove it, if you'll let me."

"Meaning—"

"I'm going to swing a stunt that 'll bring every man in this town flocking to this store in forty-eight hours after the bomb bursts. Furthermore, every woman in town will come, too.

"If they don't buy after they get here it 'll be the store's fault, not mine. Ain't that a fact?"

"It is. How're you going to do it?"

"I'm going to charter the back pages of every Sunday paper. In the middle of my ad will be the picture of the prettiest girl in the city. She'll be the prettiest girl because I'm going to say she is

"Furthermore, I'm going to describe her. And the rest of that page will be taken up with the announcement that for two weeks, beginning Monday morning at eight o'clock, said pretty girl will be working at the gent's furnishing department of the Bon Ton. Can't you see the result?"

He ran long fingers through his hair and let his eyes light up with excitement.

"There ain't a man in town with a drop of red blood in his veins who'll pass up the chance of giving the prettiest girl the once over. And when he gets here he'll simply have to buy.

"And all the wives and sweethearts of the men will come down to see what she looks like. And all them that ain't neither wives nor sweethearts will come down to look at her so's they can see how she fixes her hair, and how décolletté her waist is, and whether she's wearing her hips wide or narrow

"Object: so they might become wives or sweethearts some day."

"And if I may ask, Mr. Ackerman, where does the prettiest girl in the city come in?"

"Ten dollars a week extra in your pay-envelope, and a lot of swell advertising. And for all you know, maybe some movie company will hear about it and offer you fifty thousand a year. They say all the movie actresses make that much."

"And how about John Gregory? I'm engaged to him - almost. What 'd he think?"

"It 'll tickle him stiff," said the smooth-tongued Ackerman. "Don't you suppose any man'd like to know that the girl that was going to cook his breakfasts for the rest of his natural life is the prettiest girl in the city."

"Yes; but once she began that breakfast cooking she wouldn't stay the prettiest. Besides—"

"Please say 'yes'!"

"I don't know—"

"Think of what it means."

Take my advice and don't you ever stop to think when you've got a puzzly proposition staring you in the face. It ain't safe. Right way to do is to act on impulse

My impulse right then was to tell him he was a scatter-brained idiot and that he could get another prettiest girl. That was impulse and intuition.

But I thought it over—and that's where I slipped

Thinking over a thing like that ain't fair, because you always think the things you want to think. And there ain't many girls that 'd pass up the chance of being publicly advertised as the prettiest girl in the city.

Them that say they wouldn't care about it are them who never had the chance, or couldn't even if the chance was there—the quaint-faced kind

And no matter what I had been, or was then, or afterward became, I'm human, all too human. And, besides, John Gregory had sort of been taking me too much for granted lately.

He'd kiss me good night too casual like. And we weren't even engaged. I'm not saying I wouldn't have expected that casual stuff after we were married, but before we were engaged, it was a positive insult

And then there was another side to the question, which happened when I said yes. Ackerman took me up to the ladies' ready-to-wear and got Miss Stone busy on me.

When she finished I had on a slate-gray poplin silk skirt, a flesh-pink camisole, a you-look-at-me gray Georgette waist and other things to match.

Then we visited the ladies' boot department, where Ackerman had me fitted with slate-gray pumps and sheer, drop-stitch hose.

And as he was marching me into the general manager's private office he whispered that if I'd stick to him that outfit would be mine—with the company's compliments.

"How'll you work that?" I asks suspiciously.

"Put it down to expenses," he said. "It's legitimate."

"As much as most expense accounts," I agreed.

Up to the minute I walked into the G. M.'s office I didn't know that he was anything but a fish in human form. He gave me the once over and then the twice. While Ackerman was outlining his scheme, he kept his eyes on me, and when Ackerman finished he just nodded.

"Swell scheme," he gurgled. "Utterly swell. It 'll bring 'em swarming. And—er—do you mean to say that Miss Dawne has been working for us for nearly two years?"

"I do," says Ackerman—and the devil winks at me. "Don't you think she *is* the prettiest girl in the city?"

"I do!" explodes the G. M., and believe me, from the way he said it, I knew he meant it.

And him a married man with five children!

"It 'll bring 'em swarming," says the G. M. in conclusion. "Just a runnin' in."

And he proved a good prophet!

By ten o'clock Monday morning, the gent's furnishings department looked like the grand stand at a world's series game. Men and men and men: big men and little men, fat men and skinny men, old men and young men, married men and single men.

And that's where Ackerman made his play good. Men buy!

A woman can come in, stare you out of countenance for an hour, get your life history, learn the name of your sweetheart, and look at every inch of goods on your counter and then say:

"Thank you very much. I just wanted to see what you had."

But not a man—if he looks at anything even your eyes—he feels bashful about getting away without shelling out some coin, even if it's only for a handkerchief. The married men, especially, feel that way.

I sold gloves—they seemed to like to have 'em tried on—and handkerchiefs and neckties and shirts and hose and collars. I sold 'em by the dozen and the gross.

Believe me, I was earning my money. And it was right good fun. Especially Ackerman and the general manager—and John Gregory.

Ackerman and the G. M. hung around in the offing with smiles on their faces: Ackerman because he'd put a whopper across and had scored a professional triumph, and the G. M. because he sort of seemed to think it up to him to make up for lost time in never having noticed me before.

And he was tickled, too, over the fact that reports from Simpson & Hardwick showed their gent's furnishings department was having a decidedly off day. Nothing but charge accounts were buying there!

And John Gregory! At first he grinned at me from the suit department like he was glad he almost had a mortgage on me and was hoping to foreclose some day soon and show this bunch that he was a good picker.

Then, later, when the crowd got pretty dense and some men tried to flirt with me, John didn't seem to like it so much. By closing-time he had a scowl on that would have landed him a job as a movie villain.

And me—I was tired. Dog-tired. The experiment had been a howling, screeching success, but I was played out, and John should have had more tact than to pull such a bone.

"You must quit this, Marjorie," he says abruptly.

It was like a red rag in front of a he-cow.

"What do you mean?" I says stiffly.

"It's disgraceful, exploiting yourself to draw trade to the store."

"Do you mean to insinuate—"

"I insinuate nothing! I say it! I wanted to kill some of those men: big, fat, gross beasts who ogled you over the counter and, I dare say, tried to make dates with you."

"I ain't controlling their eyes, nor their lips, am I, John Gregory? And did I make any dates?"

"You'd better not!"

Trust a woman to pass up a chance like that. He had me good and sore, and he'd put an idea into my head. It was the first time I'd ever thought of such a thing.

"And if I should—"

"You and me are done!"

"You mean that?"

"I'm no bluffer. If you wish to retain my respect you'd better quit this job tomorrow."

As I say, a woman 'll stand a heap of things after marriage that don't go good beforehand. I told him that—and a heap more.

The result was that we didn't speak again until he left me at the house. Then he went stalking down the street, and I lay across the bed and had a good cry, and kicked off my new shoes and wiggled my toes because my feet hurt.

So John Gregory thought he could dictate to me, did he? He thought I was a weak-minded little fool to lose my head over the first rich man who came along?

Very well, I'd give him what he was looking for. I'd let one of these rich brokers - -

And the next day fate played into my hands. I didn't know whether he was a bond-broker or a movie-director, but I did happen to see him drive up to the store in a big, red racer, and I knew that he was there when he bought a half-dozen silk shirts at nine dollars apiece—and paid cash Then he shoved a card across the counter:

MR. HARVEY KNOWLES.

I met his eyes levelly and squinted out of the corner at the red-faced John Gregory, who was throwing a fit, he was that mad.

"I don't know you," I says.

"That's my name," he answers, "and yours is Marjorie Dawne. I read it in the advertisements. The name suits you," he says, "like nothing else would. Your smile carries with it the radiance of the new-born day."

"Say," I asks suspiciously, "you ain't a poet, are you?"

"No, indeed."

"I thought not."

"Why?"

"Poets don't usually have automobiles."

"I'm a very practical man. And I have a very great desire to know you better. I wonder if you wouldn't go to dinner with me to-night, and then to the theater?"

I'm saying right now that he wasn't any piker. He hit right out from the shoulder, and went to it strong. I had it on the tip of my tongue to tell him that I couldn't consider any such invitation unless we was introduced proper when I caught sight of John Gregory. He had that at-your-own-risk look in his eyes, and it settled me.

"What time and where?" I asks.

"In front of the store at six thirty?"

"You're on," I answers, and then when he had gone I managed to get close to John Gregory. "I made a date with him," I sizzled.

"You'll make no more with me," he answers.

"I should worry," I says.

And if that ain't a typical silly lovers' quarrel, then I'm a prevaricator. Honest, if young lovers had the sense of married people there'd be less quarrels - and maybe fewer marriages!

One thing I learned that night besides how the upper crust does things is that while they're dangerous and all that they're gentlemen all the way through. No rough stuff about 'em. That goes for Harvey Knowles, anyway

And say—on the level would you believe that that fellow never even tried to k'ss me? That made me suspicious at first, and then I got the idea that he was a movie-director or something.

And why not? Stranger things have happened. There's one big star who was took from a telephone switchboard and another one who was a ladies' maid, and another one who— but this ain't a discussion of morals.

But what I'm driving at is why shouldn't he be a movie-magnate? Wasn't I being advertised as the most beautiful girl in the city, and weren't there a half-dozen studios within a score of miles, and if he had been anything else wouldn't he have tried to make love to me?

I begins to see pictures of myself in five colors, outside the movie-houses—Marjorie Dawne in "The Salesgirl's Revenge." And all this time John Gregory was getting his

For three days—each evening of which I was with Harvey—John glared at me from his department, as much as to say that he didn't care where I wound up, he was done with me.

I'd have been a heap worried because John certainly is a nice, steady-going fellow,

and he does treat a girl swell—if it hadn't been that I saw he was softening up, and I knew if I kept up the game a little longer I'd have him eating out of my hand and fixed forever.

And then—to tell the truth I was having a real good time with Harvey. Get this: I ain't any Miss Innocence—not by a long shot. A girl can't earn her own living for two years and not know there's other things in the world besides Sunday-schools.

I knew how to take care of myself, and I intended to do it. And if Harvey turned out to be what people call a wolf in sheep's clothing, I meant to see to it that he kept his clothes on'

But it ain't often that a girl in my circumstances gets a chance to see things. big restaurants, night after night; shows from the best orchestra seats; to get corsage-bouquets, and five-pound boxes of candy. And, as I say, Harvey kept right on being a gentleman.

Along about Tuesday of the following week John Gregory came to me at closing-time. He had softened up, but I could see that he was still a little sore, and it kind of hurt his pride to give in all at once. Says he:

"I suppose you got a date with that flash guy to-night?"

"You win," I says.

"Don't think I care," he comes back, "or that I'm trying to dictate to you; but ain't you going it a bit strong?"

"How so, Mr. Gregory?"

"He's a rich fellow or a faker. He don't mean well by you."

"He does well," I comes back.

"That's the trouble. You girls don't know nothing about life. You go on letting yourself be deluded by a red motor-car and a lot of flowers—you go on trying to live up to them swell clothes Ackerman dolled you up in so's you'd attract all the lecherous-minded men in the city. All I got to say is this, Marjorie: When you need a friend, you can call on me."

He looks swell when he says "Remember, I'm always to be counted on, Marjorie."

Then he walks away so grand like I wanted to cry. John is an awful noble fellow, and he really did think I had got to the jumping-off place and was waiting to be pushed.

I'd cured John, and I made up my mind right there that I was going to call Harvey's hand. There wasn't any use rushing a good thing into the ground, and I'm awful strong for John. So that night in the restaurant I started right out.

"Why are you rushing me like this, Mr. Knowles?" I says.

He smiles, easy like, and says:

"I think you are a very attractive girl."

"That don't go," I retorts. "Attractive girls are on deck by the score. You've got some ulterior motive, haven't you?"

Maybe so."

"What is it?"

"You really want to know?"

"Yep—but I'll bet I know already."

"What am I?"

"A movie-director."

With that he threw back his head and laughed.

"Do I look like one?"

"No-o. Only, if you ain't then—"

"Then *what?*"

"I don't like to say it."

He leans across the table and stares at me.

"You're a pretty level-headed girl, Miss Marjorie, ain't you?"

"I used to be."

"Tell me this: How much salary do you get where you work?"

"I don't see—"

"Tell me—please."

"Well, if you must know: eighteen a week regular, and ten more while I'm the prettiest girl in town."

"That's forever, then?"

"Aw! quit your kiddin'."

"I'm not kidding. I have a proposition to make to you."

"Please don't."

"I will," he flashes desperately. "What do you think I've been chasing you for? Why do you think I've been trying to make you like me? Do you suppose it's been charity? Do you?"

He had me there.

"No-o!" I answers honestly.

"Well, I'll tell you why," he says, lean-

ing forward across the table and holding my eyes with hisn. "When I saw the advertisements that Sunday about your beauty and the fact that you, the prettiest girl in the city, were to preside over the gent's furnishings department at the Bon Ton, I knew that Ackerman had put one over on us.

"There wasn't a chance for a come-back. It was the swellest advertising scheme in the world.

"There wasn't a thing we could do except see all the trade we'd been taking from you folks for six months swing back in a day. It was impossible for us to produce a prettier girl.

"And then the idea came to me—the only way we could pull a real *coup* was to get you—already accredited as the city's reigning beauty—to come to us; to come to work for Simpson & Hardwick! So I started out to do my best to make you like me, first off.

"And now here's my offer: If you'll come with us we'll give you a year's contract at thirty-five a week – thirty-five dollars a week for a year, mind you! And as for advertising — say the way Ackerman advertised you ain't going to be a circumstance to the spreads we'll give at having got you from the Bon Ton.

"Can't you see the catch-lines:

"ALWAYS THE BEST AT SIMPSON & HARDWICK'S!

"The Most Beautiful Girl in Town Comes to Delight Our Patrons!

"Can't you see it? Can't you?"

I had wilted—completely. All bets were off. So this was the reason.

"Do you mean to tell me," I found myself saying slowly, "that you are—are—"

"The new assistant general manager for Simpson & Hardwick. Carson, our ad manager, came to me with the proposition. I am unknown here and decided to work the game so's the Bon Ton bunch wouldn't get wise.

"How about it, Miss Marjorie. Are you game to come to us?"

I thought carefully for about five minutes.

"I I—would, except for one thing," I says at last.

"And that is?"

"I'm going to get married right soon," I says, "to a young fellow named Gregory. You see, Mr. Knowles, while I'm awful appreciative of the good time you've showed me, I've sort of come to the conclusion that I'm too pretty to be running around loose!"

TRIUMPHANT.

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

I LOVE that face the best,
That, lined and seared and scarred
After the journey hard,
Shows in each token of life's awful test
A sign of victory from the fields of pain;
Tracings that proved it braved the stinging rain
Undaunted, undismayed,
Valiantly unafraid,
Glad of its grief, yet glad now of its rest.
I love that face the best!

THE FINGER OF DEATH.

BY JOHN BOYD CLARKE,

Author of "The Locked Door," "Broadname Whispers," etc.

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART THREE.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

BECOMING friendly with Millicent Driggs through an accidental meeting, in which his interest in the girl was shared by Gordon Brayne, multimillionaire, Stover Connorton met her father, Enderly Driggs, who hinted broadly of his hold over Brayne as the possessor of a dangerous secret. Following Millicent's disclosure that her father was a pensioner of Brayne's, Driggs failed to return home from his weekly visit to the office, being found dead by Hammond, a porter in the private elevator—heart failure, the doctors said. In Brayne's sanctum, in the Murravale Building, however, resenting the insolence of Mole, the secretary, Driggs had become intoxicated, referring, before he left, to "poor Sadie Phelps," at which Brayne showed great agitation. As the elevator descended Mole's fingers hovered over a row of buttons on the desk.

Sitting up with the body, Connorton beheld a mysterious intruder examining the hands, which Connorton afterward photographed, on one of them being a curious marking, like a horn. Then, after a talk with Billy Clare, policeman, Connorton learned from Hammond of an "accident" to a girl employee of Brayne's ten years previous in the very same elevator. From this and the early sending of an elaborate floral piece by Brayne, he deduced that Brayne had known of the death of Driggs before he had been informed of it, and following the discovery that he was being shadowed supplemented the porter's information by an inspection of Brayne's "morgue" file in a newspaper office, discovering the name of the employee to have been Sadie Phelps. She had boarded with a Mrs. Adelaide Ralph, whom Connorton was unable to locate. Leaving with his friend, Professor Cramer, the photograph of the marked hand, and identifying his persistent shadow by a green hat-band, he was unsuccessful in an attempt to interview Brayne, being turned away by Mole.

Visiting his Aunt Regina, he was given a lift back to town by Mrs. Brayne in her car, passing, on the way, Seth Beeton, his aunt's lawyer. Then, at the Driggs flat, Millicent told him she had got a position—with Beeton!

Finally gaining access to Brayne by way of the private elevator, after urging him to continue the Driggs stipend, at Mole's sneering speech Connorton charged him by implication with being the mysterious intruder who had examined Driggs's hands. As he departed in the elevator once more the secretary's fingers hovered over the row of buttons, one of which was red. But not until he left the car did Connorton notice that he had drawn upon his hand by mistake one of the rubber gloves he had been using at Professor Cramer's. Leaving the building again he saw the shadow with the green hat. Instantly he gave chase, at last upon demanding an explanation here and now

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY CLARE SITS INTO THE GAME

CONNORTON had descended from his interview with Brayne, and his secretary puzzled as well as angered. For his very life he could not decide whether one or both of them had knowledge of foul play in the death of Enderly Driggs.

Gordon Brayne impressed him (as he had before) most favorably. There was a calmness—a large steadiness—in the manner of the head of the Brayne Operating Company that seemed to refute any suspicion of his being actually implicated in anything criminal. It would seem that he was not that kind of a man.

Yet the mystery of the death, so long before, of Sadie Phelps, and of the recent tragic end of Millicent's father, was not to be ignored. If anybody had been benefited by these deaths it must be Gordon Brayne.

Frederick Mole was in the multimillionaire's pay. How deep would the secretary sink into crime for his master? Despite his familiar manner in the presence of Gordon Brayne, what hold over Mole might the multimillionaire not possess?

And now the irritated Connorton desired

to know which of those men he had left so contemptuously in the office above—if either was paying to have him shadowed? The student was sorely irritated when he followed the fellow with the green hat-band out of the side door of the Mirrivale Building.

There the chap was legging it for all he was worth for the nearest corner. He seemed to have an uncanny apprehension of the student's intention.

But the latter was not to be deterred this time. He was determined to have it out with the fellow.

He turned the corner into the more crowded street, and found himself face to face with an excited, open-mouthed, fast-breathing Mole!

The millionaire's secretary glared at Connorton as though he were looking at an apparition from the tomb. He shrieked, fell up against the side of the building, and thence slipped slowly to the walk unconscious.

A crowd is quick to gather on these busy down-town streets. Before an officer arrived the curious were packed around the fallen man, twenty deep.

A familiar voice at Connorton's shoulder, as he tried to raise the secretary to a sitting posture, asked

"Whativer is the matter with the fellow, Mr. Connorton, I dunno? He ain't *croaked?*"

"Fainted."

"The heat belike," said Billy Clare, the policeman. "It's hot enough down-town here to roast a dog—and that's no lie!"

A side glance assured Connorton his young friend was in citizen's dress. Billy helped set the man up against the wall.

"Now, where's the cop on the beat?" he wanted to know. "All the flatties down here can do is to stand in the middle of the street, lookin' as handsome as Astor's pet horse, and waggle a semaphore. He ought to be ringing up an ambulance for the poor guy."

"Perhaps Mr. Mole would not care for a ride to the hospital," Connorton said. "Run across to that drug-store, Billy Clare, and tell 'em to fix up a good, stiff dose of aromatic spirits for him. Quick, now!"

The young policeman, prompt to obey an order, was away and back again in a few moments. But when he returned he shouldered Connorton aside—Mole was showing signs of returning consciousness.

"Don't let him see ye, Mr. Connorton," advised Billy Clare in a whisper.

The student stood aside, glaring down at the stooping officer. On his hat Billy Clare wore a very familiar green hat-band!

The young policeman held the glass until the dazed man had drunk all the reviving draft. Then he passed the emptied glass to a boy and helped the secretary to rise to his feet

A properly uniformed policeman now pushed through the crowd. Billy Clare made a fraternal sign, saying.

"The gent's all right, bo! And he stables right in this building. I'll take him up."

"I got ye, Steve," responded the uniformed officer, and returned to his post.

"How 'bout it, Mr. Mole?" demanded Billy Clare. "Feel better?"

The Mole looked wildly about. Connorton, expecting this, had turned his back. Billy Clare urged the secretary toward the main entrance of the Mirrivale Building. The crowd began to melt.

Connorton, both surprised and annoyed, stood where he could watch the elevators until Billy Clare reappeared. There was rather a sheepish grin on the young officer's face, but he did not seek to dodge the issue

"Who put you up to this?" the student demanded.

"You did yourself, Mr. Connorton."

"What do you mean?"

"Ye puzzled me. And I tell ye true, sir, *I can't be puzzled!* It works on me mind like a blister."

"You have an itch for minding other people's business," snapped Connorton "You've been following me off and on for weeks."

"Yes, sir. You're right I have. Ever since *that* laddybuck did his little second-story job at old Driggs's flat."

Connorton was startled—too startled, indeed, to continue to express his vexation Instead, he showed unbounded amazement How had Billy Clare come to this conclusion regarding Frederick Mole, which had

so long been forming and revolving in his own mind?

"Do you know what you are saying, Clare?" Connorton asked seriously. "Do you know he is Mr Gordon Brayne's secretary and right-hand man, this Mr. Mole?"

"Sure, I know it now. But I didn't till the other day—after you'd first been up there in the offices yourself, Mr. Connorton. Oh, I've been doing some gumshoeing in me off-hours—believe me! I ain't had sleep enough of late to satisfy one of the sixteen eyes of a spider—an' a feller told me that's the number spiders have the lucky divils!"

"Never mind displaying your knowledge of natural science," commanded Connorton. "Do you mean to say nobody set you to watching me?"

"'Twas your own actions, I tell ye," declared the other. "What d'ye expect when ye are as mysterious as the insides of an eight-day clock? Sure, ye'd tempt the divil himself to go gumshoeing!"

"Explain yourself," Connorton said sternly. "My doings cannot possibly interest you."

"Say, Mr. Connorton! What did I tell ye the night that feller climbed up to the Driggs's flat? There was something queer about the old man's death. I suspected it then. That was no second-story guy, I knew. But you wouldn't open up."

"Why should I? And you told me the intruder *was* a sneak-thief."

"Yep. I was just as foxy as you was. But I knowed there was something queer. I wasn't tippin' me mitt, though. You wouldn't put me wise to what you knew, so I didn't tell you what I'd doped out. But I follered you up the fire-escape."

"You *did?*"

"Yes, sir. What d'ye think? Billy Clare's wide-awake, I tell you. Even me uncle, Dan Costigan, says there's something at the roots of me hair besides bone!

"And when you chased that feller down the fire-escape—an' him no reg'lar gun—I knowed there was a nigger in the woodpile. I'm a wisenheimer, Mr. Connorton, believe me!"

"Humph!" grunted the student, still eying him unfavorably.

"Sure! And you goes to work and pulls them shades down and puts out the light. I scrambled up them ladders in a hurry. Just as I got outside the window you set off the flash. Gee, I was hep in a holy minute! You'd took a photograph. And when you turned on the glim again I seen it was the stiff's hand you snapped."

"Where did you go when I immediately came to the window?" demanded Connorton.

Billy Clare grinned. "Up the ladder. I knowed you'd look *down*," he said

"You are undoubtedly a smart young man," Connorton retorted, scarcely in a humor at the moment to appreciate the young officer's virtues. "But why should my taking that photograph give you the right to dog my footsteps?"

"Aw, be a good sport, Mr. Connorton!" urged Billy Clare. "There's something *big* in this. You know it and I feel it. Is it murder or what? Did they croak the old man or what? Come across with the info. Let me sit into the game. I won't crab it. And I can help you—you can bet your whole wad on that. Billy Clare's no dead timber!"

"No matter what my 'game,' as you call it, may be? You, a police officer? Fie, Billy Clare! Suppose I am up to something criminal?"

"Pshaw!" grinned Billy. "What's a crime, more or less, betwixt friends?"

"If I want to make a strictly private inquiry "

"You need me to help you, Mr. Connorton," urged the other. "Look you! What made that laddybuck, Mole, topple over just now when he run into you at the corner?"

"I'm hanged if I know."

"Ye ain't doped it out? I score one on ye, then, Mr. Connorton," said Billy Clare earnestly. "Come on, sir! Turn in here with me—'tis a quiet place where the waiter 'll kape away from ye when he's served the drink. Two men can talk as though they were in a tomb."

He lifted the latch of a two-leaved sheet-iron door, gaily painted, and they entered upon the sawdust-carpeted floor of one of those queer old places of entertainment

which still mark lower New York as having had a better and more interesting tavern life previous to the birth of the cabaret.

Under the low ceiling, draped with imitation autumn leaves, the colored lights gave sufficient illumination, although there were no windows. Electric fans furnished more or less balmy breezes. The ale came in battered pewter mugs which had seen constant service for more than one generation.

"See you, now, Mr. Connorton," Billy Clare said, leaning across the deeply-scored deal table and speaking in a hoarse and confidential tone; "let me give ye my idea of how it looks. I'm the man up the tree, as ye might say.

"There's a mystery about old Driggs's takin' off. I seen that at the start. Whatever it was, you wasn't inclined to open up about it. Ye kept whist."

"And good reason," muttered Stover Connorton. "Is mere suspicion a thing to babble about?"

"Right you are, sir. But you might better have had somebody to talk it over with. I don't belave ye even spoke of your suspicions to that pretty daughter of old Driggs—and a lovely girl she is."

"You're fishing, Billy Clare," Connorton said dryly; "and I'm not biting."

"I see you're not," the young policeman said with a sigh. "Anyhow, sir, ye've been secretive. Ye've done—or tried to do—some things I couldn't make head nor tail of. Other things you did I could foller as pat as need be.

"In the first place ye saw something about the old man's hand that was queer. It was something that made you suspect he didn't die of no heart failure. And it was that made ye believe there was something wrong with the private elevator that goes up to Gordon Brayne's office."

His keen and logical analysis of the mystery was fairly startling. Connorton began to look upon the eager and rosy-cheeked young policeman with a deal more respect.

"Yes, sir. That was your beginning. Old Driggs didn't die of heart failure in that elevator," and Billy Clare clutched suddenly the student's wrist, fairly hissing his next words at him, "no more than that girl stenographer died in it of apoplexy ten years ago.

"Ah, Mr. Connorton, your pulse jumped that time!"

CHAPTER XV.

A POSSIBLE RESULT.

"YOU'VE naught to worry about, Mr. Connorton," Billy Clare said soothingly. "I'm your friend. Whatever there is behind this puzzle I'm with you. But let me sit in at the game and let me draw cards same as you.

"I seen the way your inquiry was turning from the first. The neighbors told me how old Driggs never worked but got a pension from Gordon Brayne. They said Driggs blowed about having the goods on Brayne, and that was why he was on velvet.

"Take it from me, no millionaire like Brayne is going to support an old codger like Driggs just out o' love. If there was anything suspicious about the old feller's death, that suspicion pointed toward the Mirrivale Building and the office of Gordon Brayne—what?

"I seen you was hep to *that*, Mr. Connorton. Everything you reckoned up *I* reckoned up. I followed your trail like a hound dog—only I couldn't get inside that scientific sharp's laboratory over to the colleges, and I couldn't follow you out of town.

"But I got the info that you went to Quehawket once in a while to see your aunt, so I set that trip down as outside the scope of the inquiry.

"As for your visits to this Cramer chap, I figured you went there regarding the thing that had puzzled you about Driggs's hand, and I marked your face both times. You was disappointed. He didn't help you much. Eh?"

"Not much," Connorton confessed.

"I pumped the undertaker's man dry. He told me all about the queer scars on Driggs's hands. You was hep to the fact that both his hands were scarred?"

"Yes. But that on the left palm was the more clearly defined."

"What do you reckon done it?"

"It seems, as Professor Cramer says, to be some sort of a burn."

"A burn?" exclaimed Billy Clare, sitting more erect and staring at Connorton across the table with changing expression. "Not acid?"

"He says not."

"Got one of them pictures you made of the hand, Mr. Connorton?"

The student passed over the print from his wallet without hesitation. Billy Clare had got him thoroughly interested now.

The latter stared at the photograph, nodding slowly. He asked one or two questions that had to do with the color and seeming texture of the mark. Then he said:

"How's that private elevator run, Mr. Connorton? While you was up there in Brayne's office, just now, I tried to get at it, but the cage was up and I couldn't get it down."

"No. I left the door open, so naturally the mechanism could not be thrown into gear from the bottom of the shaft."

"Huh! Safety first! I see! Well, how *does* it work?"

The student explained. The eager Clare went through the motions of starting the car—left hand upon the switch, right hand stretched forth to close the door.

He continued to stare at Connorton for a minute, his plump face actually paling under the stress of an emotion that the student did not fathom.

"D'ye mind tellin' me what sort of a row ye had with Gordon Brayne while ye was up in his office just now?"

"No row at all—with Brayne."

"Ah, 'twas as I supposed, then! Mole and you had words?"

Connorton told him briefly but clearly of his recent call upon the millionaire and all that had happened while he was in the private office.

"Mole was rabid, was he, when ye left?"

"When I stepped into the elevator I know he would willingly have killed me!" Connorton said with conviction.

"And when ye run into him at the corner of the Mirrivale Building, just afterward," said Billy Clare, still pale, "he looked as though he *had* killed you—and 'twas your ghost had risen to haunt him!"

"Great Scott, Billy Clare!" gasped Connorton. "What are you saying?"

"Ye heard me," said the young policeman, and now not a ghost of a twinkle made merry his eye while his countenance was paled by a stern determination.

"You have escaped death, Mr. Connorton, by the skin of your teeth, I verily belave. *How*, is all that puzzles me! 'Tis me belafe that elevator car is a mighty dangerous place for any one who stands in the way of Gordon Brayne—and perhaps of that man Mole, who is in his secrets."

"Explain yourself," urged Connorton. But his own pale visage expressed no surprise.

"You see it yourself, sir," said Billy Clare. "*How did you escape?* Sure, 'tis a marvel! And when you appeared on the street there before Mole, he thought ye lay dead in that elevator—he did so!"

"I—I cannot believe it," murmured Connorton again.

"You're alive. Sure, *that's* hard enough to belave," agreed the young policeman, wagging his head.

"If you are right," began Connorton.

"I know I'm right."

Connorton pulled out the rubber gloves and tossed them across the table to his *vis à vis*. "I thought I was badly rattled up there in Brayne's office," he said, having told Billy Clare how he came to have the rubber gloves about him, and how he had chanced to wear the left one coming down in the elevator. "Perhaps my confusion, which led to my pulling on that glove, was providential."

"Mr Connorton," declared the other hoarsely, "'tis my opinion ye have the luck of a hanged man! Come!" he added, rising. "Will ye go up-town with me? There was a sorry accident happened in our precinct only yesterday. To a young feller I used to go to school with—Timmy O'Brien.

"He was a lineman, and he was a reckless divil! He was making a small repair on the roof of a flat house. There was a light wire crossed a telephone wire there.

"Well, they're holdin' poor Timmy's fun'ral to-morow, Mr. Connorton. I want ye should go up there with me and look at the burns on his hands."

"We'll stop for Professor Cramer and drag him along," Connorton agreed.

He tried to speak calmly, but as he rose from the table he felt that his knees trembled. Within the hour he believed with Billy Clare that he had miraculously escaped a sudden and awful death!

In his rooms that night Stover Connorton smoked thoughtfully. From the very beginning of his entanglement with the mystery of Enderly Driggs's death—aye, before that time—he had felt a foreboding of evil. He had been impressed by the belief that a crime had been committed, if not more than one, and that it was his duty to bring the truth to light.

He recognized the fact now that Billy Clare—who had seemed a good deal of a joke to him at first—had felt a similar intuition. Connorton now recognized the keenness of the young policeman's mind, and how valuable his aid would be in the inquiry.

Professor Cramer's tersely expressed opinion regarding the comparison of the photographed scar on Enderly Driggs's palm with those burns upon the body of the unfortunate lineman convinced Stover Connorton that his own and Billy Clare's conclusions were in all human probability correct.

He and Clare had made a compact on the street corner thereafter, on which they had solemnly shaken hands. Then he had gone to his lonely and frugal dinner, and so on to his rooms.

Here, with nicotin to soothe his nerves and clarify his mental vision, he went over carefully everything that had happened in any way connected with the problem which confronted Billy Clare and himself.

First was old Enderly Driggs's boasting of his possession of the secrets of his employer. The fact that "something" had happened ten years before in Brayne's office that had quite o'erbalanced the old clerk's brain, bore out his claim. Connorton was convinced that the something which happened was the tragedy of Sadie Phelps's death in the private elevator.

The next item to rouse Connorton's curiosity — indeed, the very first suspicion breeding circumstance—was the presence of the midnight intruder in the Driggs apartment. This person, both he and Billy Clare were agreed, was Frederick Mole, the millionaire's secretary. Mole's interest in the dead man in the casket and his own figure and manner—"an evil shadow"—bore out the identification.

Connorton's discovery of the fresh scar on the dead man's hand, and that it must have been the cause of the profound interest shown by Mole, was the third important point in the mystery.

This scar had been the foundation of all the surmises that had linked together in Connorton's mind the two tragic happenings in the private elevator. Despite the medical opinion in both cases, the student was convinced that the victims were stricken in the same way—that a criminal act lurked behind their deaths.

Yet he had been unable as yet to learn if the stenographer's body had borne any such mark as had marred the hand of the dead clerk. That mystery he felt sure was locked in the breast of Mrs. Adelaide Ralph, whoever she might be, and wherever she was to be found.

The student's suspicions, and those of Billy Clare, accused one or both of two persons of the mysterious crimes: Gordon Brayne and Frederick Mole. Reason set forward the millionaire as the greater criminal. He had the greater incentive, it would seem. He must have the most at stake. It must have been his secrets, of which Enderly Driggs might babble. And because of the fear of such babbling murder had been done.

His own and Clare's surmises and discoveries convinced Connorton that the private elevator car was a death-trap. John Hammond's testimony pointed directly to this fact and to the additional actuality that the murderer, or murderers, of Enderly Driggs positively knew the old man lay dead in that elevator car on the afternoon of the tragedy

Gordon Brayne and his secretary had both kept away from the car after old Driggs's departure from the private office. Although Brayne's automobile waited for him as usual at the side door of the Mirri-

vale Building, the millionaire and Mole left by the front entrance.

Supposedly uninformed of Driggs's death until ten o'clock Saturday morning, two hours before that time Gordon Brayne personally ordered the cross of rosebuds to be sent by the florist to the Driggs apartment.

Whatever might be Mole's connection with the crime, Connorton could not get away from the fact that Gordon Brayne seemed to be the instigator and principal benefactor. As much as he admired Brayne—and he did actually admire the man—he could not ignore these facts.

As Connorton smoked and mused there suddenly rose before him a vision of the lovely Mrs. Brayne. Her undoubted fear and nervous apprehension what was their cause? Did she fear for her husband's safety? Did she know the truth about the mystery of Sadie Phelps's death? Was she expecting continually that her husband's name would be connected in some way with another tragedy?

This speculation was useless. Connorton knew it. Yet he could not drive the thoughts out of his mind.

She was such a beautiful and gentle lady! To connect her husband with the two tragedies in the private elevator would be an awful thing for her to bear—a thing that made Connorton shudder to contemplate.

Yet he could not withdraw from the investigation. Indeed, he did not wish to withdraw. Besides, that earnest young sleuthhound, Billy Clare, was now on the scent, and no such considerations as these that troubled Connorton would cause the embryo detective to withdraw from the chase. Billy Clare's last words had been as they separated:

"I'll reckon up that Mole, Mr. Connorton. You see what you can learn about Gordon Brayne and that girl that died in the elevator. Something doing there, sir, as sure as you're a foot high He was just getting married to a rich woman and that Sadie Phelps was an old flame. He pinched her out—take it from me!

"Between us," the young fellow had added, "we ought to be able to dig up enough evidence to put Gordon Brayne and that Mole where the dogs won't bite 'em! I'm dead sure one or both of 'em are as guilty as hades!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CLOVEN HOOF.

IT was not until the following evening that Connorton again called at the Driggs apartment. He had spent not a little time meanwhile in anxiously meditating upon the result of his interview with Gordon Brayne; but the moment he saw Millicent's beaming face he knew that nothing unpleasant had happened to her because of his interference in her affairs.

"Oh, Stover!" she cried, her delight urging her to that familiarity of address which always pleased him. "Oh, Stover! Great good luck has come to us! I feel as though it can scarcely be true."

"Your ship has come in?" he asked her quizzically.

"At least we have a part of her cargo—and at a time when we need it most. But I feel condemned—I do! There must be, after all, something really *good* in Gordon Brayne."

He successfully counterfeited the appearance of surprise. "He has done something for you, after all?"

"And more than we could expect. I *do* feel condemned. There is no reason why he should help us. But he has sent a sum of money to 'tide us over present difficulties,' as he so kindly puts it, and assures mother that there will be a monthly check for her as long as she may need it. See! 'As appreciation of your husband's faithful service in my uncle's time.' That is what he says. And the monthly amount tots up to almost as much as father used to get weekly."

"I certainly am glad for you," Connorton said with satisfaction. "Now, I hope you do not feel the need of accepting that position with Seth Beeton."

"Oh, yes; I have taken that!" she cried. "Why, I began to-day. I must be self-supporting. I need not take on so much extra work as I intended, however. You know something might happen any day to change our circumstances. We get this

pension merely by the pleasure of Gordon Brayne. And he may change his mind." She laughed. "We are not all so secure in our finances as you, Mr. Connorton. I must work."

He was secretly chagrined by her last remark. It reminded him sharply of his attempt to make his aunt see the advisability of changing his financial status. And, to tell the truth, Stover Connorton had little hope that the old lady would see his side of the matter.

He was confident that Seth Beeton would do all in his power to becloud the issue. He had never understood how the man had originally obtained such an influence with Miss Regina Connorton.

Of one thing he was sure. Beeton did not get from Aunt Regina more than his *quid pro quo*, for the mistress of Elmscroft was sometimes a shrewd business woman.

Seth Beeton flattered Miss Connorton, however, and had gained a certain influence thereby. He was a man who loved to sway the opinions of others.

The student had a single grain of hope in his mind. He forebore to meditate upon it; he scarcely admitted its existence, indeed. But as good had come to Millicent and her mother from his interview with Gordon Brayne, he was tempted to believe something good was coming his way, too.

The president of the Brayne Operating Company had suggested, of his own volition, of finding a position for Connorton. For some reason both Brayne and his wife seemed to feel a personal and favorable interest in him.

As Brayne had responded so promptly to his suggestion regarding the needs of Millicent and her mother, he might be expected to bear Connorton's personal affair in mind. The latter felt that he would enjoy working under such a mentor as Gordon Brayne.

And then, on the heels of this, came the thought that Brayne might be a criminal. Indeed, from several bits of evidence, the student was quite convinced that this was a fact. It seemed positive that he had benefited by the two tragedies in the private elevator, if he had not actually instigated both

It was strange how Frederick Mole, who was merely an underling, filled Connorton with loathing, while the master, Brayne, fairly charmed him.

The picture in his mind of the burly figure of the burly-headed Brayne sitting at his great desk—the very image of Power—was something that Connorton dwelt upon with admiration.

The man was a wonder! Connorton was familiar with Brayne's work and his successes of the past few years. Old Peter Gordon Brayne had been a plodding clod in financial affairs beside his nephew. The present head of the operating company and master of the Brayne millions was a Napoleon.

It stirred the student — a dreamer by nature—to the depths when he thought of working with, or for, such a being as Gordon Brayne. To have a hand in great business deals—to help carry out the financial schemes of such a mental giant—thrilled Stover Connorton just as the thought of battle and military success thrills the mind and heart of young men of a different caliber

There was play for his imagination in big business, just as he found mental solace in natural philosophy. He could almost wish, deeply as he believed Gordon Brayne to be mired in crime, that he might have a part in the magnificent schemes emanating from that mighty brain.

If such a vista of prospects opened before him, what need of Aunt Regina's tardy help? He could, in truth, be independent of her.

Connorton could approach Millicent under such favorable circumstances as a business connection with Gordon Brayne. and own to the girl how much he loved her. He could tell her all that was in his heart.

He was afraid that Millicent would become fixed in her attitude of sisterliness. Connorton realized that she had already assumed that position toward him; he did not wish it to become chronic!

What if Brayne *was* mixed up in these tragic happenings that had so bestirred the student to activity? Was he worse than many other men who sit in high places?

It was truly a temptation. Why could

he not ignore the mystery regarding the deaths of Enderly Driggs and the stenographer, and accept a chance (if it was offered him) to get into business *right?*

The thought was not easily shaken off. But when he left Millicent that evening he hunted up Billy Clare on his beat. He had joined hands with this enthusiastic young sleuth, and the problem they had set their wits upon was as vital to Clare as ever.

The young chap was yawning on post, for he had had little time to sleep of late, having given several of his off-hours to reckoning up Frederick Mole.

"If it wasn't for me pull with Uncle Dan Costigan, and the skipper knowing Uncle Dan well, I'd not be let out of the station so often," the young officer confessed. "The boss was just around and asked me if I had 'sleeping-sickness,'" and the budding sleuth grinned broadly.

"The skipper thought I was having me teeth fixed while I was follering *you* about them days, Mr. Connorton. What he don't know will never hurt him. To-day it was me Aunt Molly lyin' low with the gout that got me the chance to make some inquiries about that Mole."

"What did you find out, Billy?" Connorton asked, his interest reviving.

"That he's a sick guy. They brought him home from the office that night in Brayne's own car. Don't tell me! He thought you was a ghost riz up before him! 'Tis given out that he is overworked, and Gordon Brayne is determined he shall take a rest.

"But that lad can't rest. His conscience won't let him!" proclaimed Billy Clare.

"How about Brayne's conscience?" Connorton slyly asked.

"That's a gray mare of another color," declared the other, shaking his head. "Brayne isn't the same sort of a gazabo as Mole. You can see that. Mebbe Brayne's had his conscience extracted!" and he grinned. "They say most of these guys that have got a million have been operated on for one thing or another—and it's mostly for the removal of the conscience I don't doubt."

"You are a wise lad, Billy," commented the student.

"If we had some money now, Mr. Connorton," went on the embryo sleuth, "I'd get a lad I know to watch Mole's house—it's yonder, up on Washington Heights—and report if he goes out, and where he goes."

"Money is the one thing in this world I haven't got, Billy at the present time," Connorton said frankly.

"'Twon't cost much."

The student shook his head. "Nothing doing!"

The young policeman sighed. "Well, I'll pay Con Grogan meself, then. For Mole has just *got* to be watched 'Tis a duty we owe sassiety, as the refor-r r-mers put it.

"How about yourself, Mr Connorton? Have you the goods on Gordon Brayne yet?"

"I can see but one chance of accomplishing that," the other said reflectively.

"And that's how?"

"Through the old tragedy of the stenographer, Sadie Phelps."

Billy Clare nodded. "'Tis the goods. Let us learn why that Sadie Phelps died in the elevator and we'll come close to learnin' why old Driggs died there. That's my belafe

"But there's another thing, Mr. Connorton."

"What's that, Billy?"

"It's how in the divil's name they done it! How's the elevator rigged so that them divils can bump off a man at pleasure? Tell me that now."

"Examination of the premises should show that," the student said reflectively.

"You said it! But how'll we get to examine it?" demanded the practical Billy Clare. "We couldn't get a warrant on any evidence we have to submit. And if we did, it would put Gordon Brayne hep, of course, in a holy minute. Warn 'em, and they'll foul their trail so that nobody can foller it.

"True," admitted Connorton.

"But lave it to me," Billy added more briskly. "I'll find some way. Meanwhile do you fight shy of that private elevator—if you go to see Brayne again."

"I don't think I shall call on him right away," said Connorton. He sighed. This

conference showed him just where he stood. He could not contemplate accepting a situation with Brayne when the finger of suspicion pointed at the multimillionaire so directly.

The youthful police officer added: "There's one thing I found out about that Mole."

"What is it?" with reviving curiosity.

"Behind the house Mole lives in—'tis an old, two-story ranch belonging to an estate that's in the courts, I reckon—is a shop. The Mole dabbles in some kind of mechanics. I couldn't make much out of the stuff I saw through a winder in the roof of the shop."

"You certainly have been thorough, Billy," commented the student.

Billy Clare nodded. "That's me middle name," he said. "I'll have young Con Grogan watching the house—and watching Mole. But 'twould pay us, belike, if you an' me, Mr. Connorton, went on an off-night and you give a squint at the dinkuses in Mole's shop. The neighbors say he is all for pottering around in that shed on Sundays and holidays."

"We will certainly look into it, Billy," agreed the student.

In the morning came another letter from Aunt Regina; and although he had been expecting some communication from Elmscroft, this amazed him. It seemed to be rather more emphatic and disconnected than his elderly relative's missives usually were; and instead of dealing with the matter they had discussed upon his previous visit, it was mostly a vituperative outburst against Gordon Brayne.

Just what the Braynes had now done to upset Aunt Regina's poise Connorton could not gather, even after reading the letter twice. Beeton was mixed up with it, whatever it was, and the student was not only puzzled but worried.

He considered it his duty to make another trip to Quehawket, and as soon as the morning egg and coffee was despatched he set forth for the railroad station. Before noon he was deposited by the jitney at the foot of the Elmscroft lane.

He found the household quite upset. That perfect silence reigned made the confusion and running about of the domestic force all the more marked. Aunt Regina had not yet suited herself with a woman to take Mary's place, and it was plain that she was at present too irritable and distraught to govern properly the domestics herself

The little lady fairly ran into his arms and wept—against the third button of his vest. Her lips moved almost faster than he could read her silent, yet excited, speech.

"Oh, Stover, I am glad that you have come. Though there's not much comfort in a man. A man gets a pipe or cigar in his mouth and smokes himself into a state of stupidity and calls it calmness. Calmness! How can one be calm when everything in the world goes wrong?"

"Quite true, aunty," Connorton agreed. "I often feel that way myself. Why don't you swear?"

"There! Even in *that* mankind has the best of us poor women," she complained. "I never learned to swear, Stover; but I have often wished I *had*. What do you suppose that hateful money-mad Brayne is about to do?" she added, wiping her eyes and stepping back so as to get her tall nephew's face in focus.

"Brayne?" repeated Connorton. "I could not make out from your letter—"

"No wonder I was distraught," the little lady said. "Beeton hinted at it the other day. The valley has been stirred, time and again, by the possibility. But when one hears the cry of 'Wolf! Wolf!' so often, one does not believe—

"Oh, Stover! Beeton assures me that Brayne has got control of that moribund Quehawket Intertown Electric Company, and that the rails will be laid directly through Elmscroft — according to the old survey—before snow flies!"

His aunt's look was desperate. She stated this threatened fact as though it were a disaster with which few in the history of the world could compare.

He could not see it just that way. In his opinion an electric road through the valley would be desirable, all things considered. But his aunt and other conservative property owners had fought the suggestion for years.

The franchise had never been worth the paper it was printed upon, because local capital would not take hold of the scheme. It was bound to be unpopular. But what cared a man like Gordon Brayne for unpopularity if he had his own private ends in view?

"That wretched man will ruin Elmscroft," sobbed Aunt Regina. "He will get his own way with me after all. He is showing his cloven hoof now because I refused the other day to consider his offer for those back lots. Stover, I am heartbroken! And Beeton assures me he sees no way to circumvent the scoundrel."

CHAPTER XVII.

BUSINESS PLANS.

CONNORTON was truly sorry that his aunt should be so disturbed by this matter. Personally he quite approved the building of an electric road through the valley, even if it did split Elmscroft in half. And it was rather fine, he thought, that Gordon Brayne should take hold of a moribund project like that of the Quehawket Intertown Company and put it through, single-handed

"Of course," the little lady said, "Beeton assures me he will do all in his power to discourage that Brayne from reviving the scandalous scheme. But it is plainly a pistol at my head. That highwayman deliberately says: 'Your land, or your comfort—one or the other!'"

"Whom do you refer to as a highwayman—Beeton?" asked her nephew with a small twinkle in his eye. "If there is a sale he will get his share of the commission. You don't expect him to throw anything in the way of that commission, do you really, aunty?"

She looked at him suspiciously. "Are you in earnest?" she asked. "Do you really suspect Beeton of double-dealing?"

"I wouldn't put it past him," her nephew admitted.

"And yet he falls right in with your plans, Stover. He has convinced me that you are right."

"About what?" demanded Connorton.

"About your wish to be self-supporting—to get into business and win an independence for yourself," was the amazing declaration of the little old lady

"Just state that again, will you, Aunt Regina?" begged Connorton aloud.

"Beeton says you are right. He thinks I have really crippled you during these two years since your university course closed. Beeton says every young man should get out into the business world, whether need of money calls him there or not. Oh, he quite bears out your desire, Stover, and I have decided to give you your way."

"You mean you will back me, Aunt Regina, with a proper capital when I have found the business that suits me?"

"Yes. And the business has been already found, and I have agreed to buy into it for you," the little old lady complacently added. "It was Beeton's suggestion. He is really a most helpful man."

Connorton had hard work to keep his temper in leash. "Do you mean, Aunt Regina, that you and Beeton, without any regard to what my wishes may be, have decided upon my business career?"

"Why! You haven't chosen anything yourself, have you, Stover?" she asked

"I most certainly have not," he replied with emphasis. "It is not a matter to be decided offhand."

"Then what Beeton suggests will not conflict with any plans of yours," Aunt Regina said coolly, ignoring his last statement entirely. "Beeton has made a very sensible suggestion. Of course, if you do not find yourself fitted for the business you can draw out, having given it a trial."

"But what is it?" audibly demanded her exasperated nephew.

"Why, Beeton says he has for some time been thinking of getting new blood into his own concern. You know he has an old and well-established real estate and insurance business in Harlem. He has had several proposals from young men for such a partnership; but he has hesitated to take anybody in with him whom he could not wholly trust. Much of his business, he says, is of a confidential nature."

"Trickery," muttered Connorton. "Chicanery."

"He has agreed to sell me a one-third interest in his business, and you may take hold at once if you like, even before the papers are drawn."

"A one-third interest? And for how much?"

"For three thousand dollars. Not a great sum, Stover," his aunt said cheerfully. "I am willing to risk that in the venture."

"All velvet for Beeton," the student murmured. "Aunt Regina," he added, speaking earnestly, "suppose I do not find myself suited to the real-estate business? Suppose I am a failure in it?"

"Oh! I am sure you will not be a failure," declared Aunt Regina. "You are really a bright young man, and I told Beeton so. I expect you to do your very best with him."

"In a concern in which I am merely a nominal partner? In the conduct of the business of which I have absolutely no voice?" he demanded with some warmth. "No, Aunt Regina! I will not agree that you should give that schemer three thousand dollars. Not even three thousand cents!"

"Why, Stover!"

"You are merely buying me a clerkship in a business that has not even 'good will' to sell. A real estate and insurance agency requires nothing but a good location and a sharp man to look after the business. Beeton's office lease is worth more than the good will of his concern, believe me!"

"Why, Stover!" repeated Aunt Regina

"We do not pay premiums for clerkships in this country. I'll try the real-estate business if you say so—and with Beeton, too. Though he's not to my taste as an associate in *any* affair. But I must try it as a clerk at first, not as a partner with only a third of a vote in a two-man concern. Don't you see that I would *always* be in the minority?"

"Why—er—Stover," she said slowly, "I had not seen that side of it."

"You would have seen it quickly enough had it been anybody but Beeton who proposed it," he told her flatly.

"I—I have given my word—"

"That I would *try* it," he hastened to say. "Sure! I'll give it a trial as a clerk. A clerk without salary if need be. But no money must be passed till I say the word. Why, aunty! What would I do with the one-third partnership if I found that I did not like the business, or could not get along with Beeton?"

"Couldn't you sell your share?" she asked him, evidently quite disturbed by Connorton's handling of the matter.

"Who to? Who would buy such an interest? Ridiculous—and Beeton knows it. Will *he* agree to buy it back for three thousand?"

"That I cannot say," his aunt admitted.

"Then keep your money in the bank. If Beeton does not care to take me into his office to try the business, let us look elsewhere for an opening, Aunt Regina," urged Connorton.

"I had never thought of the real estate and insurance industry, I assure you. Really, it always seemed to me that a man can carry on that business under his own hat—and many do.

"They begin that way at least. They work up a so-called clientele, Seth Beeton undoubtedly has his own customers; buying into his concern would give me no share of the business of his personal following. I would still have to get out and hustle for my own. The business, as I see it, goes a good deal by favoritism. If you like a man you give him what real estate and insurance business you chance to have. It is mostly a matter of personality."

"I—I had never thought of that," and Aunt Regina's lips moved reflectively. "Really, Stover, you seem to have a very practical mind."

"Practical enough to see well into Seth Beeton's schemes," the young man murmured, aside. Then to the little old lady he added: "I'll see Beeton when I return to town. I'll see him to-morrow. But don't you give him any money.

"If he has business enough for another partner he must have business for another clerk. And he should be willing to pay me a little something even while I am learning the ropes. If his business won't stand such a drain, of what value would be a partnership in it?"

His aunt looked at him as though she really had not known him before. His practical ideas and business sense amazed her.

"Very well, Stover. Have it your own way," she said. "Of course it must vitally concern you, more than it does anybody else. But if you can get on with Beeton, do so. You know much of our property is in real estate—of several kinds—and it would be well for you to learn how to manage it. Beeton cannot last forever."

Connorton laughed. "See!" he exclaimed. "You prove my conclusion. If Beeton dies you will give your business to somebody else. Really, there is nothing to buy or sell in such a concern save the lease of the premises and the office furniture."

But he came away from Elmscroft determined to see Seth Beeton and look into his proposition. He must do that much in any case. He must meet Aunt Regina halfway.

The good old soul was willing to please him if he was determined to change his mode of life. And he could see that the idea of his being with her man of business appealed strongly to Aunt Regina.

Connorton had completely put behind him the temptation offered by Gordon Brayne. He could accept no favor from the president of the Brayne Operating Company while he was convinced that the time would come when he should be a witness against Gordon Brayne in a criminal court!

Stronger than ever was his belief that Brayne was closely and criminally connected with the mystery of Sadie Phelps's death. And, as Billy Clare had pointed out, if the multimillionaire was guilty of complicity in one death which had happened in that private elevator, of course he was guilty in the other.

The deaths of the stenographer and Enderly Driggs must be laid to Brayne's door, with Mole as an active accomplice in the tragedies.

Mole had been interested enough to make sure of the mark upon Driggs's palm after death. Was it not because such a mark had been upon Sadie Phelps's body? It was reasonable to suppose this a fact.

An important query was: Were Brayne and the Mole aware of Connorton's interest in the mystery, and were they actually prepared to take the field against him? And against Billy Clare?

For Connorton was willing to admit now that the young policeman was a factor—an important factor—in the investigation he had himself so clumsily begun. It was to Billy Clare he went at once upon arriving in town after his trip to Quehawket.

He had to visit the precinct station to see Billy. The young fellow was about to go on duty. His patrol would end at midnight.

"Then begins me day off," he said. "This here two-platoon system is the devil's own arrangement. Some of the married men have to get vacations off to get acquainted with their families. The kids don't know 'em when they pop in for a bit of supper with the old woman.

"However, Mr. Connorton, I'll be with you after midnight. I'll just drop me club and belt here, and shift me clothes, and be with you. Shall I call around to your house? We might as well take a squint at the inside of Mole's workshop. Con Grogan is still on watch up there."

"Meet me at the corner by the Driggs house. We can take a car from there," the student said.

"Ah!" said Billy Clare with a wink. "Is it so? Then I'll be Johnny on the spot, Mr. Connorton. Don't forget to look at the clock wance in a while so's not to keep me waiting," and he turned away, chuckling, to get into the line up before the desk.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LSTABLISHING A POINT.

CONNORTON wondered what Millicent would say when she knew of the arrangement his aunt and Seth Beeton had made for him to join the force in the real-estate office where she was employed.

To tell the truth, the student hadn't the first interest in the business. It looked to be a trumpery affair to him. Perhaps his opinion was biased by those dreams he had

had regarding a chance with Gordon Brayne.

But to be in the same office with Millicent; to see her at her work; to watch over her; to be able to do little errands for her, perhaps; to attend her hourly! That was a vista of possibilities that could not fail to charm a young man as deeply in love as Stover Connorton

When she met him that night it was with some information that postponed for a little what Connorton had to tell her. Millicent's greeting was always friendly, and Mrs. Driggs now treated him as though he were her son.

"Go in and see mama, and I'll be with you 'torrectly,' as the little girl next door says," Millicent told him. "I must finish the dish-washing job."

"People are *so* good to us," her mother said when she had welcomed Connorton. "Somebody has paid all poor father's funeral expenses."

"No?" exclaimed Connorton with a perfectly serious face.

"Yes. Milly went down to see the undertaker this noon and he handed her a receipted bill. He would not say who did it. He was sworn to secrecy. But I believe it was Gordon Brayne."

"He might well have done so," agreed Connorton non-committally.

It was not this discovery that colored Millicent's information when she joined him in the parlor.

"Just think, Stover!" she cried. "I saw your name on a lady's lips to-day!"

"You saw—oh! I'm wise," he responded, for Millicent had been practising lip-reading with him for some time—and for a purpose. If they went together to a restaurant it was her delight to "listen in" on the conversation of distant diners who had no idea their lips were "telling tales."

"Who could be talking about me? And a lady!"

"Sounds bad, doesn't it?" she said. "Yes. She spoke your name at least twice. I happened to look up from my work both times to catch her at it," and she shook her head at him.

"Not in that office!" exclaimed the amazed Connorton.

"It was. A lady came to see Mr. Beeton. He always takes customers of importance into a little glass-enclosed office at one side. I sit facing it. He can see all that goes on in the big room, and we can see him; but we can't hear what is said in that glass cubby-hole."

"I see," murmured the young man. "What did the lady look like?"

"*Now* you are interested," and she laughed.

"Naturally," he returned with some seriousness.

"I did not attend her closely," Millicent said. "But she came in an automobile."

"Not a green one?" gasped Connorton.

"Dear me! The plot thickens. Did you expect a lady in a green automobile would be talking of you?"

"And veiled," he told her earnestly. "Mrs. Brayne. I told you she brought me back to town the other day."

"It was she. I did not see the automobile, although I heard it; but of course one could not mistake Mrs. Brayne."

"What did she say?" he asked bluntly.

"I could not tell you. Do you suppose I sit there and deliberately listen in on Mr. Beeton's customers' conversation?"

"You might have in this case," he declared unblushingly. "You knew I'd be interested."

"She said the first time: 'Is it Mr. Stover Connorton?' So of course I was interested and Millicent dimpled.

"Go on! Don't nag a fellow so," he begged. "What did Beeton say?"

"I could not see. His back was toward me. Anyway, you are only interested in what the lady said," she responded teasingly.

"More so than you imagine," he told her seriously. "I'm rather much interested in Seth Beeton and his affairs—just now."

"Oh! Why?"

"Not wholly because you are working for him. I'll tell you later. What else did the lady say about me?"

"Why, I really did not see much, Stover," Millicent said more seriously. "Of course I was surprised to see your name on her lips. I can't read if people talk rapidly."

"But you say you saw her speak my name twice?"

"Yes. The second time she said something like: 'Mr. Connorton will agree, you think?'—or 'would agree.' You are in for something, Stover," and the girl laughed gaily again.

"I certainly am," he said with emphasis. "I may as well tell you that Seth Beeton is my aunt's man of business. He handles much of her money in one way or another."

"Why, Mr. Connorton! How curious!" she cried. "And you never told me."

"I couldn't tell you anything good of Seth Beeton, so I felt I would better keep still. Maybe I've said too much already."

She looked serious. "I have not been acquainted long enough with my employer to judge his character fairly."

Yet Connorton knew she had judged *him* at almost first sight, and he smiled.

"Seth is a greasy old rascal," he told her. "I will talk about him now. He is playing double-faced with my aunt I am sure. I may get closer to him for that very reason if for no other."

He told her then of the plans his aunt and Beeton had made, without regard to his wishes, for his business future. "You may be working for me, you see, if I buy into the Beeton concern," he added, smiling.

Millicent flushed faintly, favoring him with one of her searching, steady looks.

"Well, how about it?"

"I am not sure whether I should like you as an employer," was all the comment she would make.

Connorton had another phase of the mystery in which he was so entangled to puzzle over now. What had Mrs. Gordon Brayne gone to Beeton for? It was about the Braynes' desire to own a part of Elmscroft, perhaps; but why drag *his* name into it?

"What's the game?" thought the student. "Is Seth Beeton really up to mischief—and with the Braynes? I did not really think Mrs. Brayne would do anything underhand, no matter what her husband might do.

"She may desire to own a part of Aunt Regina's homestead estate; but she has not impressed me as a woman who would lend herself to any plot against one's peace of mind. There is something wrong going on—and Beeton is neck deep in it, I'll be bound!

"Pshaw, I'm deeper in the mire than ever. The more I learn about all these folks, the less I understand, it seems," Connorton added in disgust. "And I can't seem to find an opening for inquiry regarding Brayne's connection with the death of that stenographer. If I could only find the Ralph woman'

"I don't really know how to go about making inquiry for her. I'm up a stump, for fair. Wonder what Billy Clare would advise?"

When the young policeman met him on the corner a half-hour after midnight there was no time or opportunity for private discussion save of the vaguest character. The owl car they took up-town was crowded.

Getting off a couple of blocks beyond their destination, they stood on the corner and watched the car out of sight before walking back. This was Billy Clare's idea.

"Never know when somebody may be following you," he said with a wink to Connorton. "Just as well to be careful.

"If you get off a trolley, or leave a cab, short of the point you are aiming at, a dozen folk might be jogging along toward the same place. But if you ride beyond your destination and walk back, you've every chance in the world of spotting any jobby who may be on your trail."

"Wise young man," commented Connorton. But he was not unimpressed.

On the side street—one of the older highways of the heights—a fellow slouched toward them and Billy asked for a match.

"Wha'chu want a match for? You ain't got no cigareet. Ev'rybody's in for the night, and all the joints is closed in this neighborhood."

"All right, Con," Billy said. "Trot along home and pound your ear. Get back by seven thirty."

Connorton stared as the youth slouched away. The policeman grinned.

"That's the hope of the House of Gro-

gan. He thinks he's doin' something des'-prit when I let him tag a party like he is this guy, Mole. Otherwise Con would be getting into mischief

"He told me Mole was at home and abed. Everything is quiet. There isn't a cop through this block once in a dog's age. There's a fixed post at the far end of the street. Come on. I spied out the way before."

He led Connorton into a passage between a modern apartment house and a small frame dwelling. There was no light at all in the latter, and the entire neighborhood seemed wrapped in slumber.

Carefully climbing over a fence they reached the rear premises of the frame house. It was a large, old-fashioned yard they entered upon, and in it were flower-beds and a good-sized outbuilding. The latter had no windows in its walls; only in its flat roof.

Billy Clare produced the joints of a jimmy from various pockets and fitted them together with practised hand. The point of this bar he forced carefully into the crack of the shed door beside the lock.

"Well!" muttered Connorton. "I never did expect to do my first bit of burglary under the monitorship of a cop."

Billy favored him with one of his street urchin grins. "We'd ought to know how to do it, hadn't we?" he asked.

The lock snapped. They listened for a moment in nervous apprehension. All was quiet. Billy pushed the door inward.

"The jobby on the desk in this precinct will have another burglary report to file to-day," chuckled the young officer. "Come in and close the door tightly, Mr. Connorton. I want to flash a glim."

"What will happen to us if we're caught?" demanded the student, in no happy tone of voice.

"Twenty years is about the limit for first-class burglary," admitted Billy Clare. "But if you tell his nibs you're a drug addict and want to take the cure, he'll probably suspend sentence in your case The cure won't do you a bit of harm."

"Huh!" grunted Connorton. "How about you?"

"Oh, me? I'm an officer in cits clothes. I happened to see you sneaking in here and I nabbed you in the act. They won't catch *me* with the goods, Mr. Connorton. Never fear."

"Well! Of all the nerve!" gasped the student.

Billy Clare chuckled as he flashed the beam of the electric torch about the interior of the shed.

"Ah! the curtains are drawn across the skylights," he observed with satisfaction. "They won't be so likely to spy the light from an upper window of one of these apartment houses and telephone for the reserves. Well, Mr. Connorton, what do you think of those dinkuses?"

Already the student had forgotten his exasperation and was eagerly looking about the shop. At once he discovered something that to his mind seemed important. If Frederick Mole, the secretary to Gordon Brayne, found his mental recreation in this shop, then he must be an expert electrician. He told Billy Clare this.

"By holy!" murmured the young officer, "we've come pretty near getting the goods on *him* at any rate."

"Don't be too sudden. Why should he be the principal in those shocking murders? What did he make by Driggs's death—or the girl's?" demanded the student.

"Mole's knowledge may have been made use of. It probably was in rigging the death trap down there in the Mirrivale Building. But we want to get the instigator of the crime, don't we? We want evidence to connect the principal with the murders—if they *were* murders. It doesn't look to me as though Mole is that principal."

"I guess you're right," sighed Billy Clare. "It isn't as simple as A. B. C."

Connorton was giving most of his attention to several electrical contrivances (the "dinkuses," as Billy Clare called them) which were evidently the constructive work of the owner of the shop. Just what they were for, Connorton could not make out. But from the material of which they were built, and the solidity of their foundations, he believed that they were rigged for high voltage.

"He's by way of being something of an inventor," the student said reflectively. "I'd like to turn that feed switch on the wall and see how these things go."

"Gee! We'd rouse the neighborhood. There's a power wire fed into that box. I marked that the other day. He can get enough electricity here to run a whole machine-shop."

"Ah! I'm not anxious to appear before the judge and have you testify against me," grunted Connorton. "But I tell you right now: I've seen enough to assure me that we're on the right scent. If that private elevator down-town is a death trap, *Mole rigged it.*"

"True for you," agreed the young officer nodding.

"Mole possesses sufficient knowledge of electricity to arrange some deadly contrivance by which the victim, shut into that elevator car, becomes his own executioner. Ugh!" he shuddered. "It's a devilish thing."

"You never said a truer word, Mr. Connorton," agreed Billy Clare. "And I'm thinkin' you should pay a long candle for your own escape."

"But to *prove* it. There's the rub."

"We've got to get into that elevator, and into Brayne's private office," Billy declared. "I'll see me Uncle Dan. It's getting ripe —this thing."

"Wait," Connorton advised. "We may have established the commission of a crime —two crimes, in fact; but we have not established the motive for either."

"Aw—gee!"

"Have we?"

"I suppose you're right, Mr. Connorton. But what can we do more than we've done?"

"Find that Mrs. Ralph," the student said with conviction. "She has the information we want. Keep tabs on Mole if you like. But I believe there must be some way of finding that lady who was Sadie Phelps's nearest friend. Meanwhile—hello —what's this, Billy?"

The beam of the young officer's lamp had been idly flickering about the room. There was a stand in a corner with something covered upon it. Connorton, curious about every contrivance in the shed, stepped quickly to the corner and Billy followed.

"Pshaw—a typewriter!" grunted the latter. "Nothing doing with a typewriter, Mr. Connorton. Sure, old Driggs warn't killed with *that* sort of an arrangement."

"No," agreed the student thoughtfully. "The only connection this ancient writing-machine seems to have with this problem is that Sadie Phelps probably used one."

He had removed the rubber cover and was idly playing on the keys of the machine. There was a sheet of paper in the typewriter, and he struck a few letters thoughtlessly.

"Hist!" exclaimed Billy Clare. "You're leaving a trail behind ye, Mr. Connorton. Mole will know somebody's been here."

Connorton chuckled. "He'll come pretty near suspecting that when he sees how you jimmied the door, won't he? Hello! Some of the letters are defaced. Brayne looks drunk, written on this machine. I'll take out the paper, Billy—so. Cover it up. Now we're off.

"But I wonder what the deuce Mole does with a typewriter here in his workshop?"

"He ain't got it rigged like a gat to kill a man, that's one thing," grunted Billy. "Step aisy, Mr. Connorton. We're well out o' that, anyway.

"And now to work! I'll see me Uncle Dan Costigan and sound him—sly like, you know. Maybe there'll be some way of getting into Brayne's office without making a mess of things. Meantime, Mr. Connorton, do you kape out o' that private elevator," advised Billy Clare, shaking an admonitory head.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE PAPER.

CONNORTON did not delay making the call he had assured his aunt he would make upon Seth Beeton. He set out for One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street early in the forenoon. Early for him, at least, for he had never attempted to rival Old Sol in his rising habits.

The evening before he had questioned Millicent closely regarding her employer's method of business, its seeming volume, and the number employed by the Beeton Company. They had agreed, too, to meet in the office as strangers.

"What old Seth doesn't know will never hurt him," Connorton had said to Millicent, quoting one of Billy Clare's aphorisms. "If he should learn that we are friends he would run right away and tattle to Aunt Regina. And when I introduce you to aunty, I want to introduce you *right*."

Millicent had blushed at this, but had made no comment, as Connorton half hoped she might. Now that the mistress of Elmscroft seemed so complacent regarding his desire to become self-supporting, the young fellow was tempted to take Millicent into his confidence regarding the state of his heart!

If anything would afford him reparation for joining Seth Beeton and delving into the mysteries of the real estate and insurance business, Millicent's presence in the office would be it.

The office was in an old building on the less busy side of the street, built before the grade of the highways in Harlem was re-established, for the office level was two perilous steps below the sidewalk.

The huge room was cluttered with old-fashioned office furniture. There was even a high cashier's desk behind a cage of brass screening. Millicent's desk, Connorton immediately saw, was in a corner where the light from a side window was good, her back to the door.

At the gate in the railing sat a sharp looking, curly-haired Jewish boy. Beeton's one clerk was out for the moment.

The caller could see Seth Beeton sitting in the glass-enclosed private office previously mentioned. He was a big old man of a gross body and with long, greasy-looking, gray hair which soiled his shirt collar. Connorton was reminded of an old-time Indian medicine lecturer whenever he looked at Seth Beeton.

His garments were as untidy and as shapeless as meal-sacks would have been. The suit he wore was of snuff color, and the vest was splotched (and so was the area of shirt front exposed) with coffee and the matutinal egg.

He was, indeed, a very untidy old man, with a snuffling way of speaking and a habit of lightly rapping an accompaniment to his speech upon his desk with a pair of silver-framed eye-glasses he wore attached to a shabby black ribbon.

"My dear boy! My dear Stover! I am delighted to see you," was his unctuous greeting. "Your dear aunty wrote me here is her letter just to hand—that you would come at once to see me. I apprehend you mean business.

"You are in earnest. You have been a dreamer long enough. Hum! Action becomes the young. I have been an active man myself, Stover—an active man; but I am no longer young."

He sank his fat jowls lower into his shirt collar. Connorton knew well his activities. He had sat in this office for many years like a fat spider in the middle of his web, waiting for silly flies to blunder down those two break-neck steps and in at the door of the office. Whether they were dollar flies or hundred-dollar flies, they were all meat to Seth Beeton.

"When your dear aunty," pursued Beeton in that tone that always made Connorton want to kick him, "when your dear aunty mentioned the fact that you were desirous of a business opening, I at once thought of *my* desire for a young and active partner whom I could trust."

"I warrant you did," was the visitor's unspoken comment. He merely nodded.

"Naturally I could not consider taking every Tom, Dick, and Harry into my business."

"True," thought Connorton. "A sucker may be born every minute, but they don't *all* drift your way."

"'Ah!' said I to myself," pursued Beeton, "'here is my chance.' Oh! I am shrewd, Stover. I am always looking out for number one," and he chuckled oilily.

"I believe the confessed villain — who confesses openly to petty villainies the better to hide his really desperate schemes— is the more despicable," was Connorton's thought. He tried not to show this thought

in his countenance, for he knew Beeton was slyly watching him.

"'Here is a young man,' I said to myself," droned on Beeton, "'of splendid connections and upright character. If I have thought him a sluggard, I was mistaken. Hum! He is awake to the realities of life! I—"

"This is all very interesting, Beeton, I have no doubt—to you," broke in Connorton coldly. "But let us get down to brass tacks. You want to sell an interest in your business for three thousand dollars—"

"Oh! never mind the details, my dear boy," interrupted the old man. "Your dear aunty and I have—hum—attended to all that."

"Not on your life!" said Connorton firmly. "*She* is not buying into your concern. If there is any partnership arrangement made *I* shall make it with you, Beeton. Don't lose sight of that point. You're not going to have a woman to deal with."

Seth Beeton showed no chagrin. He smiled even more broadly. "Your dear aunty is a shrewd business woman, Stover. I have found her to be such through many years."

"In most matters she is your match. But she cannot decide this business. You must deal with me—and with me alone."

Seth Beeton sighed. "Then there will be no feeling of chivalry to restrain me. I am a hard bargainer, Stover. I am noted for it."

"You won't be in this case," Connorton returned grimly. "For I am going to put the proposition myself, and you can take it, or leave it, just as you please. Aunt Regina rather fancies my getting into your line of business, for as she truly says, *you* can't last forever, and her real estate holdings are considerable."

It was a brutal blow. To suggest that he might lose his hold upon the Connorton estate and his influence with Aunt Regina made the Beeton visage actually turn pale. The young man accorded his feelings no consideration whatsoever.

"So more to please Aunt Regina than anything else, I am willing to look into the business—to serve an apprenticeship, as it were.

"But no partnership, Beeton. The three thousand dollars remains in aunty's bank, and there will be no papers signed until you have proved to my satisfaction that a third of your business is worth the money; and likewise until I find if I am fitted for the business.

"Do you get me, Beeton? A clerkship—say with the nominal salary of ten dollars weekly—for six months."

"Oh, no! Oh, no, Stover! I couldn't agree to that," wailed the old man, hit between wind and water when the paying out of money was suggested. "That isn't business."

"It's the only business *I* will hear to, Beeton. You refuse and you lose all hope of ever touching Aunt Regina's three thousand. I will put in six or seven hours daily here—that's long enough for any clerk to work. You can treat me as an errand-boy if you want to. But I propose to get something for my services. It will be worth ten dollars a week to you just to have me sitting around this old office."

"But but I have a capable clerk. Randolph has been with me for ten years."

"If you have need of a partner you have need of another clerk," announced Connorton. "Let's not bother to talk about it, Beeton," and he arose and picked up his stick and hat.

"I can't do it, Stover," wailed the old man.

"Good day, Beeton. I'm not sure that I sha'n't try some other real-estate office in the neighborhood just out of spite. You know, Aunt Regina's Harlem property is considerable."

"Don't go, Stover. Don't be so precipitate. Let us talk it over," begged Beeton, struggling to rise. For once the spider saw the fly uncaught and carrying away with him a part of the web!

"Yes, or no, Beeton?" demanded Connorton, with the door of the private office open and looking full at Millicent across the big room, and smiling.

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Dammit, yes!" squealed Seth Beeton. "Come back and shut the door."

So it was determined that Connorton should begin on the Monday following his

business career under the tutelage of old Seth Beeton. "And a pretty reputation I'll gain in Harlem if I follow the precepts and example *you* furnish, Beeton," he coolly told his aunt's man of business.

The latter smiled forgivingly. Perhaps he liked Stover Connorton all the better because the young man stripped his cloak of hypocrisy from him. Or perhaps because, in the end, he was sure he would get the better of his new clerk.

In the Sunday paper Connorton chanced upon a full-page article devoted to Gordon Brayne and a part of his career. He had just put over, it seemed, one of his financial coups involving no little intrigue and strategy. The animus of the newspaper article was plain, and must have been instigated by those who had opposed Gordon Brayne in this or some other big deal.

Personalities were dealt in, but in a way in most cases to avoid the responsibility of libel. However, one part of the article struck Connorton as skirting perilously the border of libelous suggestion.

> The felicity of Mr. Brayne's private life has been marked, and to the surprise of those who knew him best in his gay bachelor days. But at the time of his marriage to the very lovely Lucille Hetherington there was some small scandal connecting Mr. Brayne with a young woman who had acted as his personal stenographer for more than a year.
>
> It was never satisfactorily ascertained whether the young woman in question died a natural death or committed suicide. Those who claim to know declare that she went directly from a stormy scene with Mr. Brayne to drop dead in one of the elevators of the Mirrivale Building. The announcement of the near approach of Mr Brayne's wedding day had appeared in the papers that very morning
>
> It is odd, by the way, that an old clerk of Brayne's, one Driggs, should recently have died likewise in one of the elevators of the building—and in the same, or a similar, fashion as the young woman. Mr. Brayne is a stormy petrel in both public and private life. Those connected in any way with him, say the stars, should beware

It was an unkind and venomous article. Stover Connorton thought first, when he read it, of the effect it would have upon Mrs. Brayne. He felt sorry for her.

These few paragraphs, too, clinched again his suspicions of Brayne's old association with Sadie Phelps. The girl *had* died under mysterious circumstances. And it was known that she had been friendly with Gordon Brayne before his marriage.

CHAPTER XX.

A GOOD DEAL OF SETH BEETON.

BILLY CLARE had come in between spells of duty, and was smoking one of Connorton's well-seasoned briers on this Sunday afternoon. For several days the inquiry into the mystery of the private elevator tragedies had lain dormant.

"But 'tis not dead," quoth Billy, shaking his head. "Look at this, now," rustling the Sunday sheet that his host had handed him, containing the scurrilous story aimed at Gordon Brayne. "Here's his past rising up against him. Here is the reminder of that poor girl that died down there in that shaft of death—that's what it is, Mr. Connorton.

"Have ye thought of any way of tracing that Ralph woman who must know all about Sadie Phelps and how she was linked up with Brayne's affairs?"

"No. There are not many by that name in either the city or telephone directories," Connorton said reflectively. "I've searched both, and Mrs. Adelaide Ralph is listed in neither book. She may have married again. She may have died. She may have moved away. It's a teasing proposition. She might be under our very eyes and we not know it."

"Ain't it so?" murmured Billy. "And how to get a quiet squint at that elevator? If the Mole has rigged it to bump a man off when they like—by the way, Mr. Connorton, he goes back to the job in the morning."

"Who? Mole?"

"Yes. So his sister, who keeps house for him up there on the Heights, told the grocer-boy; and the grocer-boy be this time is Con Grogan's twin," and Billy grinned. "Ah, that Grogan kid thinks he has the makin' of a fly cop in him!"

"He has a good mentor," commented

Connorton. "That reminds me, Billy, my own time will be more regularly employed than usual, beginning to-morrow." He explained in brief his newly acquired interest in the Beeton Company.

"Aw, chee!" ejaculated Billy. "You're not going to give up this Brayne business, are you, Mr. Connorton?"

"Not a bit of it, Billy. But it looks to me as though we'd have to wait for something to turn up."

"Like stepping on the tines of a rake," said the other with disgust. "Then the handle turns-up and cracks you one on the snoot! *I'll* see about turning up something, and don't you forget it."

"Don't you be too reckless, Billy," advised the student.

"I'm going to dope out some way of our getting into those offices at night, believe me!"

"Your mind runs to burglary and other midnight crimes," Connorton said. "Office hours are short down-town. Can't we get a look in at that elevator by other than burglarious methods? I was quite fed up on them when we cracked Mole's workshop. 'Breaking and entering' against my name on the police blotter won't be a bit nice. What will my Aunt Regina say if I become a public character with a serial number and a striped suit? Oh, boy! Think of being 'mugged' at headquarters and 'finger-printed'!"

"Aw, cripes!" exclaimed Billy Clare, grinning. "We pulled it off all right, didn't we?"

"Breaking into a back-yard shed and burglarizing Mr. Gordon Brayne's private office are two very distinct things. There'll be watchmen down there at the Mirrivale Building, and burglar alarms, and—"

"Gee! But you're the cheerful guy I don't think!" ejaculated the young policeman. "Ain't you willing to take a chance?"

"Not that kind of a chance. Don't be reckless, Billy," the student repeated.

But he was thoughtful. He was studying to some purpose on the problem Billy had put up to him. There must be some way of getting into the private elevator and office of Gordon Brayne, and with time to examine both. He had the germ of a scheme in his mind already; but he said nothing more to Billy at the moment. It was an idea that needed careful consideration.

The next day, Monday, brought new interests to Stover Connorton when he entered upon his duties at the office of the Beeton Company.

These so-called duties were rather indefinite at first. Seth Beeton had given less thought to what his young friend should do in the office than he had to Aunt Regina's three thousand dollars. The ancient recipe for rabbit stew suggested Seth Beeton's business methods: "First catch your rabbit."

Having caught his victim, Aunt Regina's man of business was inclined to let matters take their course regarding Stover Connorton's finally becoming a partner in the real estate and insurance business. Seth Beeton was much blown up with the wind of his own importance; and he expected everybody to take him at his own valuation. Thought Connorton: "Somebody is sure to stick a pin some day in the bladder of this old chap's self-conceit. I wonder if I am destined to be the 'somebody' in question."

Having once given his mind to a thing, the student proved to be a man of ideas. Beeton had proclaimed his desire to get freshness and youth into his concern. But before that first day was over perhaps the old man was inclined to doubt the advisability of getting anybody quite as fresh as Connorton into the office!

In the first place Connorton wanted a desk. Seth had a battered old table with a cabinet of pigeonholes and locked draws on top of it, in his glass-enclosed private office. The boy, Moe, had a decrepit typewriter-cabinet at which he sat when on duty as Cerberus at the rail gate. Randolph, who was a quiet, steady chap of middle age, used a huge roller-top, stuffed to the eaves with papers.

Millicent's desk was the only modern piece of furniture in the place.

"You ought to rip it all out and fit up the office to match Miss Driggs's desk and chair," the new clerk suggested to Beeton.

"My dear boy! My dear Stover! Are you mad? This—this ridiculous arrangement with you is bad enough. Ten dollars a week! H-m! I fear I shall have to let Moe go. I can go to no further expense. H-m! Positively not. Every dollar going out should meet two coming in. That has been my motto since I have been in business. H-m!"

"Looks to me, Beeton, as though the outgoing dollar had met twenty coming in," quoth Connorton dryly. "Well, I've got to have a desk. How can I look as though I were busy if I don't have a desk-top all littered up with papers and stuff—deeds, leases, fire-insurance tabulations — all the tools of the trade?

"Fie, Beeton! Don't be stingy. Let me at least dress the part if I am to make the bluff of being earnestly engaged in business. If I am going to catch flies let me have something sticky."

"H-m! My dear Stover, you are very funny—very funny. Why not use that desk?" and he pointed to the ancient cashier's desk behind the screen.

"Great Scott! If I perched myself behind that cage I'd have to wear a quill stuck back of my ear and a black stock and knee pants. *That* is of the early Victorian era. The living-room furniture at Elmscroft just about matches that old high-boy.

"Come, Beeton, be modern. Be up-to-date. How can you expect me to be interested in a business that appears to be so suffering from senile decay that even the furniture in the office is on its last legs? I've got to have a proper desk to stretch *my* legs under."

"Then get it yourself," growled Beeton, going into his glass "show-case" and banging the door.

Connorton took him up immediately and literally. Before night he had a handsome desk and chair delivered to the old corner real-estate office, and the new furniture certainly did help to brighten up the big room. But there would be a pretty row, Connorton expected, at the end of the month, when the president of the Beeton Company got the bill for the desk and chair.

The new clerk selected what he considered to be the strategic point at which to set his desk. Every person entering from the street had to face Mr. Stover Connorton. He roved Moe, the Jewish errand boy, to a less prominent position and made it almost necessary for the customers to put their first queries to him, if he was not otherwise engaged.

If there was any transient business the embryo partner in the Beeton Company proposed to know about it—and be in a position to get it, too!

The second day he settled down to an appearance of industry that quite startled the old-timers who entered the office. The air of the place had heretofore been that quiet, sedate atmosphere of a well-conducted undertaker's-shop. Customers were inclined to whisper their requests as though fearful of disturbing the serious occasion.

Stover Connorton spread out a set of desk furniture that was striking, if not gaudy, likewise billed to the company. He had neat piles of documents under glass-weights on the four corners of the desk.

In truth, these were for the most part old leases, insurance papers and copies of deeds and the like, which he had rummaged out of the drawers of the ancient cashier's desk. They gave an air of industry to his table.

The wide blotter before him was already well decorated with impressions of the reverse of his own rather ornate signature; for the very first thing he did was to write to everybody he knew inviting them to entrust him with any business in his line that they might have.

"And believe me," he said to Randolph, "some of those fellows I went to college with, and who are what the papers call 'the scions of our wealthiest families,' have got to come across. As long as I am in this business I'm going to show old Seth that I am alive."

At his elbow he insisted upon setting the telephone-switch standard, although he entered the booth in the corner when Billy Clare called him up on this Tuesday afternoon. He did not care to run the risk of anybody overhearing what he said to his policeman friend.

"Look up No. 66 Elberon Terrace, The Bronx, Mr. Connorton. Ye have more time than I have, for the skipper is just now soured on me and is keeping me in the house."

"What's at 66 Elberon Terrace, Billy?" Connorton asked.

"The divil only knows. But Mole went there twice last week when he was supposed to be laid up for repairs. I failed to note it before in Con Grogan's rayport. And this morning, Con says, he telephoned there early from the corner near where he lives, his own phone being out of order. That Grogan kid is getting sharp—and he's costing me a mort of money, Mr. Connorton," complained Billy.

"I'll devote my munificent salary to the cause—ten dollars a week," promised Connorton. "I'll find that Bronx address tonight."

He had intended going around to Millicent's house, but under cover of needing a letter written he excused himself to her.

They were very circumspect in their association in the office. Connorton with the jealous eye of a man in love—watched the manner of Randolph and Seth Beeton with the stenographer. The former treated Millicent as a man might wish his sister to be treated were she obliged to work in a business office.

As for Beeton, he acted like the benevolent old scalawag he was. He was as sugary as he could be to the stenographer and "my dear girl'd" her until Connorton wanted to kick him.

Seth Beeton hovered around her in a most exasperating way, and often Connorton caught him ogling the pretty stenographer through the windows of his private office while she was at work at her machine. Yet, after all, he did not appear such an amorous old fool as this implied. He was brusk enough with other women, young or old, who came into the office.

Watching closer, the student began to suspect that Millicent interested her employer for some reason not at all connected with her physical attractions. He could not imagine Seth Beeton falling in love with anybody save himself. And Millicent knew well how to keep her employer in place.

It was on this Tuesday afternoon, too, that the new clerk of the Beeton Company looked up from a form of lease he was idly studying to behold the big green touring-car belonging to the Braynes, steering toward the curb in front of the broad windows of the real-estate office.

Connorton was interested immediately. Mrs. Brayne's former visit to the office—of which he had learned through Millicent—had piqued his curiosity not a little. She was alone in the rear of the car now. Was she coming in?

He saw the lady rise from her seat as soon as the car halted, as though to disembark. Facing the door of the Beeton Company, her glance must have fallen upon Connorton sitting at the new desk. She hesitated.

Then hastily sitting down, she spoke to the chauffeur and the car moved on.

The surprised Connorton heard the door of Seth Beeton's office clash open and the old man hurried out.

"Who was that? Who was that, Randolph? Did you see that car?" stuttered the old man.

"I didn't notice, Mr. Beeton," the head clerk said.

Old Seth looked slyly at Connorton. "Did you notice it, Stover?" he asked.

"What car do you mean?" drawled the student. "There are so many passing all the time."

"H-m!" ejaculated Beeton, and went back into his cubby-hole.

"Something doing—something doing," muttered the young man. "And something they wish to keep secret from me. I wonder what?"

Connorton looked up Elberon Terrace on one of the street-plat maps and after dinner ventured into the untamed Bronx. The terrace was one of those semisuburban streets the bucolic air of which is fast disappearing from upper New York. There are few to be found now between the Harlem River and Yonkers.

Sixty-six was a slice of a row of brownstone front houses of good appearance. Connorton hung in the wind a bit, rather undecided how best to gain the information he sought regarding the occupants of this

house. He lacked Billy Clare's familiarity with such inquiries.

And while he waited in the dusk beneath a shade tree across the street from No. 66, he was startled by the appearance of a figure coming up from the car-line—a figure not to be mistaken.

"'As large as life and twice as natural!'" breathed Stover Connorton. "Now! what the deuce does Seth Beeton do in this neighborhood?"

The bulky figure of his aunt's man of business toiled up the hill It was a warm evening and Beeton mopped his bald brow.

Puzzled, the young man under the shade tree watched his approach. He began to suspect that there was something important to his inquiry in the coming of Seth Beeton. He was sure of it when the old man climbed the steps of No. 66.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNEXPECTED TROUBLE.

IT suddenly smote upon Stover Connorton's mind that he did not know—had never known—where Seth Beeton lived. He now saw the real-estate man put his key in the lock of No. 66 with the confident air of a householder, and then his broad, snuff-colored back disappeared through the open doorway.

"Good *night!*" quoth the amateur sleuth. "I might have found this out without coming 'way up here to the Bro-nix wilderness."

After waiting a minute or two, Connorton crossed the terrace and marched up the steps of No. 66 himself. He did not wish to be seen by the real-estate man, and trusted to the darkness to mask him. But he lit a match to look at the plate over the door-bell. It read: "S. Beeton."

"Of course," he told himself, as he strolled away toward the car-line, "I was not looking for old Seth's residence. I was looking for the place where Frederick Mole called twice last week and to which address he telephoned this morning.

"What the deuce does it all mean? Both Mole and Mrs. Brayne interested in 'the man of business'? For the same reason?

"Did Mole come here on some private and personal matter, or for his employer?" ruminated the young man. "If it is Brayne's business, has it to do with the purchase of Aunt Regina's west eighty? What the devil is Seth Beeton up to?"

As there was nobody to answer this final question, and it was already late in the evening, there was nothing further to detain him in this part of the town.

He bought a paper at a news-stand to while away the time he waited for a surface car, and in this he found the following reminder of the scurrilous article about Gordon Brayne that had appeared in the Sunday sheet:

> The *Clarion* finds itself misinformed on several points in the article dealing with Mr Gordon Brayne in its Sunday issue last. These errors we hasten to make apology for. Notably the statement of the suspicion that the stenographer who died in the Mirrivale Building elevator about the time of Mr. Brayne's marriage, committed suicide after an interview with Mr Brayne.
>
> The young woman died of an apoplectic stroke. At the time of death she had not been employed by Mr. Brayne or in the offices of the Brayne Operating Company for some weeks. She was calling upon some of her old friends in the offices of the Brayne Operating Company just before the tragedy in the elevator.

That this brief editorial was a forced apology was all too evident. It did not take the sting out of the story in the Sunday paper. The innuendo—the venom—was not eradicated by this. Powerful as Gordon Brayne was—much as he could sway men and money—he could not force the newspaper to undo all it had done.

Riding down-town, Connorton thought of this. He wondered again how Mrs. Brayne had taken the story?

Naturally the papers must frequently print articles about her husband that would hurt the gently bred woman. Or was she wise enough never to read the public press? Somehow Connorton felt that Mrs. Brayne allowed all these stinging insects of publicity to annoy her!

He dropped off the slow moving surface car at a point near to the city home of the Braynes on Riverside Drive, and

climbed the steep hill to the broad and beautiful way — more beautiful at night, with its perspective of myriad lights and view of the river, than by day. It was a favorite haunt of the student, who, heretofore, had seldom sought his bed until the fretful calls of awakening birds at dawn announced the resurrection of ordinary city life.

It was now past midnight; but there were lights in the Brayne mansion. The big, green touring-car which seemed to be Mrs. Brayne's favorite vehicle, stood before the door.

Connorton saw a footman and a maid run out staggering under the weight of suitcases and bags, and the chauffeur — the fellow in the green-gray livery helped them stow the baggage in the car

Then came Mrs. Brayne and she came alone.

Connorton, from the shadow of the granite wall across the wide drive, saw her descend slowly to the car. For once she was not veiled. The pale moonlight and the paler beams of the electric lamps hung high over the street, etched out her perfect features clearly.

She was unhappy. This expression was so marked, so powerfully signified upon the lady's countenance, that Connorton felt a stricture in his own throat and the salt sting of tears in his eyes.

Yet she did not weep. Wo looked out of her dry eyes, their gaze turning soon upon the face of the tall and ornate dwelling that for more than ten years had been her home.

It came to Stover Connorton suddenly—it smote through the joints of his armor of careless interest—that Lucille Brayne was bidding the house good-by!

It awoke him to a closer attention. He saw her step into the car, wondering now in his heart what it all meant. He looked up the flight of marble steps. Not until then did he descry the bulk of Gordon Brayne. The big man stood in the dusky doorway of the mansion; but a shaded vestibule lamp cast a single ray of light upon his face.

He was looking out—over the Drive and the parkway beyond; over the river on which, like fireflies, twinkled the lights of boats steaming to and fro; over the Palisades, their heights pricked out by infrequent lamps, over the whole world was he looking, perhaps—and on his own past life

Connorton, enthralled, confident that he was beholding a domestic tragedy that even the gossipy newspapers would never learn, watched the woman settle herself in the car while her husband stood there, clothed in all the outward calm of a statue

What fire was burning in his breast? What reflections seared his conscience?

And the woman — the woman he had brought here to the old Peter G. Brayne mansion ten years before to whom he had plighted his faith and an undivided allegiance—what were now her emotions as she turned her back upon the great house?

She leaned forward to speak to the chauffeur. The engine of the car began to purr. Connorton saw the single hasty glance she cast upon the figure of her husband at the top of the steps

The green car hummed away up the Drive and Gordon Brayne went slowly into the house and closed the door.

In the morning Beeton scowled more heavily than before when his new clerk drifted into the office about ten.

"You will ruin the morale of the office force, Stover," he declared. "Already Moe 'wants off' to go to the ball game; and look at Miss Driggs!"

Connorton was even then looking around in surprise for Millicent. She was not in sight, and her typewriter was still covered.

"Not in yet!" snapped Beeton. "They'll all be doing it if you come in so late every morning. I'm here myself by half after eight."

It's made you old before your time," Connorton told him cheerfully. "The 'Early to bed and early to rise' fallacy is what has made Americans old at forty. Now, Miss Driggs—"

"What do you expect to do in the real-estate business if you are not up and after the early worm, my dear Stover?" returned the man of business unctuously. "Be an early bird—be an early bird."

"But the worm is early, too—and gets taken in," suggested the younger man, sitting down at his desk. "Now for the appearance of industry to fill the eye of the possible customer. Tell me, Beeton, how do you ever make a commission in this office?"

"Sell something," grunted his mentor, scowling at him again.

"All right. What do you most desire to dispose of that is on the list? Give me something hard."

"Sell a church!" snapped Beeton, plowing into his private office in disgust.

Connorton turned a reflective eye upon the amused Randolph.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Connorton," the latter said. "There *is* such a parcel of property for sale. Our ticket is on it." He told the new clerk the name and situation of the abandoned sacred edifice. "A small congregation of foreigners contracted to buy when the original occupants of the place of worship moved up-town into a new edifice. The contract fell through. A dozen brokers have it on their lists."

"Great Scott! And can't sell a church?" demanded Connorton. "Of all things! I'm going to take a look at it. Oughtn't it to bring in a good commission?"

"The office should get twenty-two hundred dollars out of it. Your share would be two hundred and twenty."

"No!" exclaimed the embryo real-estate broker. "Do you mean it, Randolph? Me for that two-twenty. I need it. Let's have all your info about it. That church is my meat. Ah!" he added suddenly. "Here is Miss Driggs."

The moment he spied her crossing the street he became serious. Before she descended the break-neck steps into the office he saw that something had happened to greatly disturb the girl.

(To Be Continued NEXT WEEK.)

THE ACROBAT'S LAMENT.

BY CLARK HINMAN.

I'VE been ten years with Barnum's,
And with many other shows,
How many lands and seas I've seen
The Lord, He only knows;
I've given my performances
To kings who gaping sat,
And by the "talent" I'm proclaimed
The premier acrobat.

I thought I was an artist,
That all things I could do,
But very meager were my powers,
I've since found to be true;
For while my body I can twist
With any one on earth,
Alas! I can't undress myself
Inside a Pullman berth.

THE "KICK" OF THE LIVE WIRE.

Learning How to Handle and Care for Telegraph Wires Is a "Shocking" Business.

BY JACK MOORE.

"WHAT'S the trouble, Eddie?" queried the quad chief with a knowing look in his eye. "Did you get a 'bite'?"

"Only a small one," replied his junior assistant as he looked round to see where his file had gone. "This thing is certainly some hot, though."

Eddie MacMurray, the junior assistant, had been in the quad department of the big Central Telegraph office only a few weeks, and had undertaken to clean up the points on a pole-changer.

The Tyro Usually Gets Bitten

Before doing so, however, he had forgotten to cut off the main-line current. As a result, when he took hold of the set-screw of one of the posts, with one hand, and his file in the other hand came in contact with the armature of the instrument, he became the "bridge" between the two places, and got the full force of both positive and negative currents, each about three hundred and eighty-five volts.

When he got this shock his hands flew up over his head as though he were trying to throw his arms out of their sockets, and his file flew out of his hand.

"Shocks," "burns," or "bites," as they are called in shop-language, are the common heritage of those who are learning how to take care of the wires and instruments in a large telegraph office.

Operators whose instruments carry the usual main-line currents may get them occasionally, and so do even the chiefs, but it is usually the assistants, especially the juniors and beginners in the various departments, who get shocks or bites of greater or less intensity, the seriousness of the shocks being in proportion to the voltage of the current in use on the wires or instruments with which they come in contact.

The feed-current received in the central office for transforming into the various powers required, has a voltage of 500, and an amperage of 20. This current is taken up by transformers of the motor-generator type—a machine which is both a motor and a dynamo

The motor part takes in the current of 500 volts and rotates the dynamo portion, which is so designed that it generates a current of 110 volts with an amperage of 50.

This current of 110 volts is in turn used for driving all the secondary motor-generators, and for the lighting system. These secondary motor-generators take in the 110 volts on the motor part, and generate from the dynamo portion 385, 250, 100, 25, or 6 volts, according to the design and winding of the different machines.

In the handling of the heavier currents, great care must be exercised, as a bite from one of them might necessitate a trip to the doctor, or a lay-up in the hospital, if nothing more serious.

Why Bites Are Seldom Fatal.

The strongest current used in the working of telegraph-lines and instruments, however, rarely exceeds 385 volts, and is often as low as 6 volts, with the amperage running from 250 milliamperes — or thousandths of an ampere—to 25 or 30 milliamperes, the arrangement being that where high voltage is required the *amperage* is low, while where high amperage is required the voltage is low.

The former is necessary on the main

wires, where force is required to overcome the relatively high resistance of long lines, and the latter in the main office, where volume is required to work the locals of the sounder, the transmitter and the pole-changer.

Only by such an arrangement as this can the safety of the telegraph apparatus and its operatives be secured.

Bites Set No Signals.

The shocks received from the local currents, where the voltage is low and the amperage high, are not serious. It is on the main lines—some of them several hundred miles long, and carrying currents of from 200 to 385 volts with a low amperage—that the worst bites are received.

A noticeable thing about these electrical shocks is their suddenness. No warning whatever is given that one is coming, and the man who gets one, and gets it good, will at the instant let go of anything he has hold of, no matter what it may be, and his hands involuntarily will fly up over his head or out from his sides with astonishing celerity and force.

He doesn't know why he does it. He doesn't even have time to think where his hands are going or of what they may come in contact with. All he knows is that the great inner law of self-preservation is forcing him with all its power to get his hands away from the instruments, and to get them away as quickly and as far as he possibly can

In a large office, where a number of men are busy about the wires and instruments and are continually passing and repassing each other, there are latent possibilities which are liable to break out at any moment in very tangible form. When such is the case, it is only to be expected that things of a decidedly interesting nature may possibly occur.

Short Didn't Know It Was Loaded.

An instance of this kind came up when Wire Chief Knight took in hand a young fellow by the name of Short, to break him in on the main switchboard. After some days of try-out Knight confided to the chief operator that the young fellow, although a nice boy, was short in more ways than one, the thing especially short being his memory.

"He seems determined to get things mixed up," complained the chief. "Just yesterday the M. C. despatching-wire No. 127 went open, and I told him to call up Weston Junction, and patch it at this end with No. 183, which was spare at the moment.

"He got Weston Junction after a few minutes, and ordered him to put 127 East to 182 West. No. 182 was in Buffalo 'krum' at the time, and without asking any questions he pulled out the krum wedges and cut in the despatcher's loop.

"You can imagine what happened. He said that while he was calling Weston Junction he forgot the number of the wire I told him to put in the patch. What he'll do next it's hard to say."

When Knight returned to the board he found several requests waiting for him, among them one to swap the wires in first and second Chicago duplexes. No. 278, in the first, had developed induction, while 281 remained clear, and Chicago wished the best wire in the first.

So Short Stopped a Kick.

"Here, Short," called Knight to the other end of the board, "swap these two wires. You can't do very much damage there, but be sure you have the currents off both sets before you make the swap. If you don't you may get a nasty nip."

Short looked up the 278 and 281 straps on the board, and then at the wedges in the jacks of the two wires, and everything looked O. K. to him. He forgot the chief's admonition about the currents, however, and reached in and pulled out the wedge from No. 278.

He held this in his right hand, and reached for No. 281's wedge with his left, not noticing as he did so that his fingers were touching the brass plate of the wedge already in his hand.

And Passed It On To the Wire Chief.

At this moment Knight turned to see how the swap was progressing, and saw at a glance what was about to happen. With a quick movement he stepped over:

"Look—"

The warning was never finished. Short had grasped the wedge in 281 with his left hand and pulled it from his jack, and as he did so he let his fingers touch the brass of the wedge.

With an exclamatory "Jinks!" his head went up, and his left hand came back with terrific force, catching Knight squarely in the center, at the moment, of the most forward and exposed part of his anatomy. He doubled up like a jack-knife and sat down in a heap on a chair.

Didn't They Love That Guy!

When at last he got his breath, and was able to straighten up, he turned to his regular assistant and said:

"Confound that brute, he'll be injuring some one around here yet. I told him to be sure and see that his currents were off before he made the swap, but it's no use. He'll never learn to look at the wedges and see if they are loaded before he takes them in his hands."

Another instance of a somewhat similar nature occurred at about the same time, in the repeater department. The rain and fog had played havoc with the wires, making them very "heavy." Among them the "AP," with its heavy newspaper load, was working badly. At the central office, it had a three-way repeater in. That is, it came in on one wire and repeated and went out on two wires.

The repeaters were "dragging," and when assistant chief Lansell pulled them up, they developed a nasty kick.

This was only one of Lansell's troubles. In fact, he had so many that day, and they had come so fast, that they had gotten on his nerves, and he found it hard to keep from saying things.

Among the requests that came to him were two from Traffic Chief Mendelsohn, asking him to have a look at No. 28 East. This was a way-wire, repeatered at the central office to a short branch-wire that ran to a large manufacturing-plant, a few miles out.

Lansell had the requests on hand, and was just waiting for a chance to slip over and adjust the repeaters, when Mendelsohn stepped into the department and stopped just back of his chair. He stood there for a moment watching Lansell trying to adjust the newspaper-wire repeaters, then, leaning over his shoulder, he began:

"Say, Lansell, I've got a terribly heavy file on that No. 28. Some of them are getting old enough to wear whiskers. Can't you do some—"

The question was never finished. Lansell turned to look up. His right hand still retained its hold on a binding-screw on the western repeater. His left hand was free, but, as he turned, it dropped and touched the armature of the eastern transmitter.

This mere touch, however, was all that was needed. The damp atmosphere and the heavy currents at the battery-end of the line, heavy because of excessive leakage, made conditions ideal for a first-class shock.

More Trouble On the Wire.

Lansell got it, and got it "good." He rose about a foot from his seat, and both hands flew up over his shoulders with the suddenness of lightning, and the force of a catapult. His right hand, in going up, caught Mendelsohn under the nose.

It was a terrific blow and knocked Mendelsohn back against the opposite side of the repeater-desk.

Clapping his hand to his nose and mouth, he straightened up after a moment of bewilderment, and exploded at Lansell:

"What in the deuce are you trying to do? Do you want to kill a man?"

"No, I don't," replied Lansell, with difficulty keeping down a fit of laughter that was struggling for an outlet. "I couldn't help it, Tom. When I got that dose, those hands of mine had to go somewhere, and your phiz happened to be right in their way."

"That's all right," retorted Mendelsohn, "but you'll have to go some to make me believe that a fellow gets a biff on the nose like that, just as a mere accident."

With this he stamped out of the repeater department, still holding onto his nose, and leaving Lansell in the midst of a fit of laughter, trying to explain to his chief just how the incident had occurred.

PURPLE AND GOLD.

BY H. KEITH TRASK.

A Pair of Colored Brethren, Victims of an Unkind Fate, Plan Revenge and Then—

FATE cast on the first stitches of the fabric of this tale the day Dan Holder's car broke down when he was on his weekly round, collecting the rent due him from the various properties he owned in the colored section of Port Florida.

Ed Ryan was the tenant of one of Dan's properties that lay furthest out of town. Mr. Ryan had intended that day to give notice that he was moving to Baynesboro.

Unfortunately, the transmission of Holder's car, which had long been in failing health, gave up the ghost before Dan got around to Ed Ryan. When his landlord did not arrive, Mr. Ryan could see no valid reason for delay and moved himself and his worldly goods without the formality of leaving behind him the money due.

For some time Holder had been considering a classy little six, lately introduced to Port Florida motoring circles, and this unfortunate *contretemps*, whereby he was defrauded of two dollars and fifty cents, lawfully due, decided him to close the deal. But when it came to making an allowance for the old car, the dealer's offer did not tempt him.

"I'll pay spot-cash and keep the old car," he decided. "I can paint her up fancy and sell her to some fool darky."

Holder was, and still is, pulling the latch in one of the three crews that handle the Peninsular Railway's "Citrus Land Special" between Port Florida and Jacksonville.

He had every third day free at home and he utilized much of his spare time in repairing the old car—he patched the transmission so it would hold, then turned his attention to decorative art, a hobby with him.

The body he clothed in royal purple, striped chastely with maroon. The chassis was encrimsoned and the wheels he painted cream-color, embellished with gold-leaf in a sunburst effect.

Seen at five miles an hour, or over, that touch was a masterpiece. Altogether, it became the niftiest outfit ever seen in Tarpoon County.

Moreover, Dan wrought these wonders with the door of his garage wide open. Most of the dusky population of Port Florida uses Dan's street in passing to the main part of town and he always had a gallery hanging over the fence. That car was much coveted on the East Side.

We may now introduce our hero, Bunker Hill Wade, colored—very much so—five feet ten and beautifully proportioned, firing the 1064 for Cap'n Dan Holder, and very proud of his exalted position in the community.

For many moons Bunk had been courting Miss Frances Elmora Mignonne Fontaine Woodville Wilson, assistant in the kitchen of the railroad eating-house at Baynesboro, where the Citrus Land Special halts thirty minutes for supper on its southward journey.

On an evening when the Special was pulling out of Baynesboro, Holder perceived that there was perturbation under the kinky thatch of his dusky henchman and sidekick.

"What's on yo' mind, Bunk?" he inquired, hooking the lever back to the running-notch.

"Cap'n, I'm studyin'," Bunk confessed. "Ah've sure done took a notion to that there Minnie Wilson. But Ah ain't alone—no, suh!"

Shaking his head, Bunk applied himself to his scoop, while Holder, grinning, widened on the throttle. "Some other fellow cuttin' you out?" he asked as Bunk straightened up again.

"'Tain' exac'ly dat," the fireman answered. "Dey's a sociable up to de Baynesboro church to-morrer evenin'. Ah done invited Minnie to be mah company. Ah figgered to have a new suit fo' de occasion an' now Ah ain't got it."

"Bones been rollin' bad?" Holder surmised.

"Dey sho has, cap'n," Bunk affirmed. "Dey's thutty dollahs 'tween me an' dat suit in de express-office at Po't Florida."

"H-m!" was Holder's only comment at the time.

It was after the 1064 was in her home stall in the roundhouse that Holder again broached the subject of Bunk's love affairs. The fireman had assisted his boss to remove his overclothes and was polishing Holder's shoes for him, as usual.

"Bunk, you're a darn, shiftless, no-account black devil!" Holder stated.

"Yassuh, cap'n, Ah reckon Ah is," Bunk admitted.

"You owe me fifteen dollars right now," Holder continued, preparing to depart, "and I ain't goin' to help you get that suit out of hock, but you come around to the house in the morning. I got a suit I reck on 'll hold you."

Accordingly, Wade was at Holder's house early in the morning. Dan was in the garage, applying gold-leaf to the sunburst on the left rear wheel. Bunk's eyes glistened as they rested on that transformed cripple

"Lawd, Cap'n Dan, ain' dat a *car!*" he breathed, walking around the masterpiece in a kind of ecstatic daze.

"She is sort of pretty," Holder admitted. "There's your suit, Bunk."

He indicated a light-gray outfit, very little worn, neatly piled on the step of his new six, and topped by a last year's green fedora hat practically as good as new.

But the finery had very little charm for Bunk at the moment. He was revolving about that purple and gold chariot, drinking in its manifold perfections.

Suppose—suppose that he could drive up to the Baynesboro eating-house in that and casually invite Miss Frances Elmora Fontaine, *et cetera,* to ride!

Miss Wilson, it must be confessed, was mercenary. The admirer with most to offer was the admirer who received the larger share of her favors.

"Whut you goin' do wid dat car?" Bunk queried wistfully.

"Oh, I'll sell it, if I get my price," Holder assured him.

"*Sell* it—sell *dat!*" Bunk's jaw dropped. "Yo're jokin'!"

"I can't use two cars," his runner pointed out.

Mr. Wade glanced contemptuously at the new six, sober black, with no relief. Mechanically, she might be a wonder, but—Then he sighed, collecting his plunder.

"Ah's powerful obliged fo' dese fixin's," he stated. "Ah anticipates a pleasurable evenin'."

"Don't you forget that you got to be at work to-morrow mornin' at seven thirty," Holder warned him.

"No, suh—Ah'll come back on Twenty-Nine," Bunk promised. No danger of his taking a chance of being set down the list.

To wear blue overalls and auto-goggles and yellow leather gauntlets; to swagger before the less fortunate members of his race as fireman of the Peninsular's crack train—a privilege shared by only two other mortals—loomed even larger in Bunk's eyes than Minnie Wilson's favor.

The gray suit and the green hat—which were a perfect fit—made a hit with Miss Wilson. Also Bunk had saved enough out of the wreck perpetrated upon his fortunes by the fickle bones to blow the lady to everything purchasable at the party.

The first fly in his ointment appeared when he discovered that No. 29 was running sharp on time. She frequently was as much as an hour late, but to-night, of all nights, she had to be right on the ball. When, somewhat diffidently, he told the lady that he would have to take her home, she tossed her head.

"Ah ain't aimin' to leave yet a while," she decreed.

"But Ah's got to go in ten minutes," Bunk protested.

"That don't worry me none," Miss Wilson assured him. "Mister Ed Ryan 'll escoht me if you-all has tuh leave."

There was that in her tone that made Bunk realize that if he did leave, he would commit a *faux pas*. Miss Wilson would not readily forgive his preference of a mere job to her fair self. He weighed the conflicting claims of love and duty.

Duty won. He caught Twenty-Nine. His last glimpse of his lady registered her as accepting the proffer of another plate of ice-cream at the hands of Ed Ryan.

Hunched down in a corner of the smoking-compartment of Twenty-Nine's colored car, Bunk considered this new angle of his problem. Hitherto, his earnings—on the Peninsular, a negro fireman is paid something like forty-five per cent of what his runner draws—had been sufficient to enable him to hold up his end with all the swains who were vying with him for Miss Wilson's favor.

Ed Ryan, however, was a horse of another color. Ryan was by way of being a capitalist. He was growing watermelons on shares with a white man and always had money to lend his less provident brethren.

He also had money to spend on his fancies, and Bunk never doubted that Frances Elmora Mignonne would become his fancy This aspect of the case required study.

When next the south-bound Special reached Baynesboro, Bunk was on the lookout for his lady. While the train was at the station and the passengers eating, Miss Wilson had always found time to stroll out and converse with her chief admirer under the cab of the 1064. Sometimes, giggling mightily, she had permitted herself to be hoisted into the cab

Bunk always kept his engine spotless. The cab bright work, mirror-polished, the boiler-head plumbagoed. No contaminating spot of soot or grease would sully the lady's hand or garment.

That cab, the planished jacket, the golden bell, and the handsome copper crown about the stack were Bunk's joy and pride. But his personal god, the individual touch that singled out the 1064, was the Shriner emblem in brass that adorned either side of the dome.

Holder, not Bunk, of course, was the Shriner, but Bunk was the acolyte who served before the shrine.

To-night no Minnie gladdened the lover's eyes. Anxiously, he searched the platform. In vain did the colored lady attendant in the white waiting-room smirk and simper in the doorway. Bunk had vision just then for but one member of the opposite sex and she had failed to answer roll-call.

He tried the water and started the injector. Then, while the boiler was filling, he covered his fire. After that he waited impatiently, glancing at his watch and at the water glass, fiddling with the gage-cocks, until the moment when he could shut off the gun.

The engine ready at last, he made sure that Holder was not at hand to detect his desertion, then scurried around the corner toward the restaurant kitchen. Maybe Minnie wasn't working that night.

She wasn't. She was outside the kitchen door in earnest converse with Ed Ryan; in her face was a beatific expression of rapture. Ryan's horse and buggy stood near by.

While Bunk glared around the corner of the building, the pair moved over to the buggy, and Ryan busied himself with manipulating a box that stood on the floor. The watcher's heart sank. That box looked like it was!

To Bunk's outraged ears floated strains that should have been sweet, but were not. Then Miss Wilson perceived his glowering visage

"Oh, Mr. Wade," she called sweetly. "C'me over heah an' admiah dis lovely talkin'-machine whut Mistuh Ryan's done presented me wiv!"

This was stark, staring *tragedy!*

"Ah'm sorry—Ah ain' got time, Ah got tuh be on mah way," Bunk choked, then fled to the shelter of the cab. He bunched himself up on his seat to consider.

That talking-machine as good as lost Minnie to him. Unless—unless— The sheer, brilliant audacity or the idea that had come to him robbed him for a moment of breath. The splendor of the conception made his heart gallop.

No longer need he be dependent upon

the whims of Twenty-Nine. He could come and go between Baynesboro and Port Florida at such times as suited him. Glowing visions danced before his dazzled eyes.

When Holder appeared, industriously plying a toothpick, his fireman was whistling —the very tune into which the talking-machine had burst but a few minutes agone. One by one and two by two, the passengers straggled out and boarded the cars.

The air-whistle blew, and Holder pulled out. As they struck the curve through town that would hide the depot from them, Bunk went to the gangway and looked back.

Two figures still stood beside a buggy behind the building. But what did he care? He had discovered the counter irritant.

The train had passed Harrisdale before Wade had mustered the effrontery to broach the subject nearest his heart. As they slid down the grade toward Citrus Park, he crossed the cab and, steadying himself by a hand on the reverse-lever, began:

"Cap'n Dan, how much does yo' want fo' dat little car?"

"Three hundred," Holder told him, reaching for his plug.

"Yas, but how much yo' want cash *down?*" Bunk persisted.

"Three hundred," the runner stated inexorably. "Ain't no time proposition connected with that car."

He blew for Citrus Park, then twisted about on his seat to eye his fireman.

"Look here, Bunk, what you want to know so much about that car for?"

"Ah—Ah's aimin' to buy it," Bunk confessed.

"No, you're not aimin' to do any such a thing, you black fool!" Holder snapped. "You don't want that car any more than you want a pocket in your shroud. I'm not goin' to sell you that car. Not under any conditions. You can't *buy* that car!"

"But, Cap'n Dan," Bunk protested, suddenly sick with apprehension, "Ah jus' nacherly *got* tuh have dat car. 'Deed I has—yo' don' know, suh, de putticler succumstances "

"I know your circumstances better'n you know 'em yourself," Holder interrupted. "I won't sell you that car nohow. Furthermore, don't you pester me about it any more or I'll knock the fool head off you!"

This was an ultimatum, as Bunk well knew. As far as he was concerned there was no hope. Holder would not sell him the car under any circumstances. Bunk, however, was not easily turned from a purpose.

There remained the possibility of a deal through an agent. His life happiness depended upon the acquisition of that purple body, crimson running-gear, and sunburst wheels.

All night he pondered the problem. He couldn't blame Holder for insisting upon a cash transaction. No man in his senses would sell on time a thing of beauty like that car; to run the risk of having to take it back with its manifold attractions marred by usage or accident.

But that condition greatly circumscribed the choice of an agent. The agent must not only be a person to whom Holder would be willing to sell. He must also be a person who could advance the greater part of three hundred dollars; finance the transaction, in fact.

Bunk decided that he could pay fifty dollars cash. The coming Monday would be pay-day. Now that Holder had given him a suit, the one that lay in the express office to his order could go back to the maker. Yes, he could pay fifty down and from thirty to forty per month thereafter.

The net result of his cogitations was a visit to Baynesboro the following day. But not to Miss Wilson this time.

Ed Ryan was his objective. Ryan appeared to be the only financier within Bunk's circle capable of handling a transaction of this magnitude.

"Whut yo' want?" Ryan inquired suspiciously, when Bunk had summoned him to the melon-field fence.

"Ah wants to borrer three hundred dollahs," Bunk blurted out.

"Three hundred dollahs! Man, is yo' crazy?" Ryan gasped.

"Naw, Ah ain' crazy," the applicant assured him. "Ah'll pay fifty dollahs down an' fohty a mont' an' interes' an'—"

"Look heah, nigger, whut yo' aimin' at?

Git it off yo' chest; Ah'm busy," Mr Ryan exhorted him.

"Why, to buy dat car," Bunk explained, perching on the fence.

"Whut car?"

"Cap'n Dan's lil car, whut he's got fo' sale"

"Whut fo' yo' want dat car?" Ryan probed, suddenly frowning.

"Why—" Then Bunk saw a light. In his eagerness he had forgotten that Ryan promised to become his most dangerous rival. "Ah jus' want it," he stated

"Yo' does, does yo'?" Ryan mused.

Then he transfixed Bunk with a piercing glance.

"How come yo' don't deal wid Holder? Ain't he yo' boss?"

"He claim Ah don' need no car," Bunk explained truthfully.

"Ah reckon he's right," Mr. Ryan surmised. "Howsomever"—he cogitated with bent head—"how much interes' yo' pay?" he demanded suddenly.

"How much interes' yo' want?"

"Twelve per cent."

"All right," Bunk agreed with alacrity.

They parted after they had appointed a meeting for Monday, immediately following Bunk's visit to the pay-car. He was to exhibit fifty dollars spot cash

Whereupon, Ryan was to visit Dan Holder and purchase the car, turning it over to Bunk as soon as they were out of sight of Holder's place.

Bunk spent the time until the departure of Twenty-Nine in Miss Wilson's company and greatly titivated the lady's curiosity by his mysterious hints of a golden future soon to become a present.

It began to look as if the pay-car and Monday would never get around, but they arrived at last. Bunk had, by discreet inquiry, kept informed that the car was still unsold

His feet scarcely touched the pavement as he and Ryan proceeded toward Holder's house. Ryan, with a great show of fairness, had decreed that the fifty dollars need not be passed until he formally turned over the car to Bunk. The money was very heavy in its owner's pocket.

Around the corner from Holder's, Bunk backed up against the fence to wait in a delicious agony of anticipation, while Ryan went on to the back door. Dan was at home and welcomed Mr. Ryan in person.

"Come to pay that rent?" he inquired.

"Cap'n Holder, how much yo' want fo' dat car?" Ryan asked, ignoring the hint.

"Three hundred and twenty dollars," said Holder.

"But Bu—dey all said how yo' was askin' three hundred," Ryan protested. His eyes were not on Holder. The garage door was open and he had caught sight of the car

"I'm askin' *you* three hundred and twenty," Holder insisted inexorably. "Three hundred for the car, two fifty back rent, two fifty interest, five dollars for two weeks' notice, and ten dollars damages."

To Dan, dealing with Bunk Wade and dealing with Ed Ryan were two different matters. Holder had no personal interest in Mr. Ryan. Moreover, he was a defaulter.

"But dat's a scan'alous high price, cap'n," Ryan protested.

He was still drinking in the beauty of the car and he fully perceived what motive had impelled the simple-minded Bunk to apply to him

"That's my price to *you*," Holder decreed, making as if to close the door. "I'm not particular about selling to you, no way. There's more'n eighteen colored people after that car right now. The first one that brings the money gets the goods."

"Heah's de money in yo' hand!" Ryan produced a tattered roll of bills and commenced laboriously to count, aided by a copiously moistened thumb

Bunk Wade, hopping around on one foot and then the other, heard loud sounds of gasoline progression. Then the chariot flashed by the corner, Cap'n Dan Holder instructing Ryan how to navigate it.

Bunk shrank back against the fence, lest Holder see him, suspect and refuse to consummate the deal.

Presently the car returned, Ryan guiding it and the muffler definitely unmuffled. Trembling in every fiber, Bunk waited. It seemed years later when the chariot again appeared at the corner. Ryan was alone this time.

Bunk made a step toward the curb—and stood transfixed. Ryan had gone on; had vanished toward the East End at thirty miles an hour, the speed-limit notwithstanding.

Bunk gathered himself together and leaped in chase, weighted down by a sickening premonition.

A huge black cloud in front of the Saturday O. K. Cash Store, far down Palmetto Street, gave him direction. He burst through it, scattering compatriots ruthlessly and brought up panting against the chariot's purple door.

"Gimme mah car!" he exploded with his last remaining breath.

"Yo' car!" Mr. Ryan laughed in scorn.

"Nigger, where does you git a noise like dat at?"

"It's *mah* car!" Bunk panted, realizing that the premonition had been a true hunch. "Yo' bought it fo' me. We done had a 'greement."

"Where is dat 'greement?" Ryan inquired calmly, lolling back in the driver's seat and biting the end from a nickel cigar. "Is yo' got a writin' whut says dis is yo' car?"

Words were vain. Bunk's right hand moved toward his hip. He had there a safety-razor blade, so set in a hardwood handle that both edges would cut.

Then he stayed his hand. The nudgings, the chuckles, the sotto-voce but plainly audible remarks showed him that public opinion all ran counter. Many in that crowd were beholden to Mr. Ryan.

Abruptly, Bunk swerved away.

"Ah'll *git* yo'—an' Ah'll git yo' *good*, Ed Ryan," he promised over his shoulder.

Thus was consummated a deed of blackest treachery.

Pulling north on Tuesday, Holder noticed that something was wrong with his fireman. Bunk performed his duties as efficiently as usual, but his cheery smile, his whistle and his gift of quick—but respectful—repartee were conspicuously absent.

Once or twice the runner attempted a probe, but the negro is the most secretive mortal alive when he chooses to be, and Bunk chose to be reticent.

All unsuspected by Holder, Bunk was nurturing a deep and ever-growing resentment against his runner. He and his kind reason, if it can be called reasoning, by a process that defies analysis.

He had suffered, was suffering grievously and, primarily, Dan Holder was responsible. Ryan's treachery was bad enough, but that was punishable by means within Bunk's compass. All he required was a favorable time.

Holder, however, was different. Holder was beyond his reach. Yet Holder, his white man, the one person above all others to whom he was entitled to look for protection and assistance, had failed him at the most crucial time

Through Holder he had lost his heart's desire. And he couldn't square the account. He had cause to be morose and sulky.

Northbound, the Special halts at Baynesboro only long enough to take water. From his elevated position at the rear end of the tank, Bunk cast his eyes down the road that led from Ed Ryan's place.

Afar, he descried a cloud of dust that rapidly neared the station. Soon there emerged from the dust a purple body, crimson running-gear—the tank overflowed and wet him to the knees.

That night in Jaxville, Bunk found a speedy crap-game and other things. He reached the engine next morning for the return trip blear-eyed, stone-broke, and ripe for battle or murder.

He was in such a state that he forgot to purchase the package of oatmeal for the water-cooler, as he had been strictly commanded to do.

Now it so happens that Dan Holder was inordinately fond of that delicacy of our Southern waters, the festive shrimp. Sauntering toward the 1064 at the leisurely pace befitting a day promising unusual warmth, Dan beheld a tempting display of the boiled shell-fish in a window.

He stepped inside and purchased a quart for consumption later on. When he reached the engine, he stowed them in his lunch-box and placed the lunch-box on the running-board ahead of the cab.

The roundhouse gang had replaced a tender-truck brass during the night and the job had been poorly done. The brass became

hot before they had gone twenty miles—red-hot.

At a little flag-station Dan repacked it in the broiling sun. When he climbed back aboard the engine he was as hot as the brass had been. He made direct for the ice-water, to find it pure and undefiled.

"Bunk, darn your black hide, you forgot the oatmeal!" he raved. "I've a mind to knock your worthless head off!"

He hurled a piece of dirty waste at the head in question.

This was quite legitimate and ordinary procedure—from Holder. Bunk's cue was to grin deprecatingly, apologize and promise amendment, whereupon Holder would have cursed him for the next ten miles and after that all would have been lovely.

But this time Bunk merely dodged the waste and muttered to himself, with a baleful glance at Holder. Dan saw it and checked incipient mutiny instantly.

"None o' that," he warned.

Bunk ceased to mumble, but another heavy score went down against Dan.

Three times more Dan repacked that box, before brass and journal came to a proper bearing. The day grew hotter and hotter. The breeze induced by the engine's motion was scorching.

In the steel Pullmans the passengers perspired, panted and shucked everything that decency did not imperatively demand. Dan Holder drank ice-water without the safety-inducing oatmeal.

About two thirty he ate his lunch; boiled shrimps, ham and egg sandwiches, mince pie, and two oranges. The potables were a pint of strong coffee, a bottle of pop, and two tin cups of ice-water.

It was probably the shrimps that did it. I don't believe that they were quite fresh when they went into the pot and, I am pretty sure, they had been in the fish-store window overnight.

Then they had reposed in Dan's lunch-box, alongside a hot boiler, for several hours. Anyway, an hour before they reached Baynesboro, Dan was the victim of acute distress.

A ruction racked his interior so stormily that he could only grit his teeth and hang on, dreaming of the doctor's sign on the second-story window of the Railroad Block, opposite Baynesboro depot.

At last the 1064 halted at the water-crane. Dan spotted her, released the air and, staggeringly, got down from his seat, praying that the doctor would be on the job. On the ground, the conductor confronted him.

"Dan, there's a private car to switch in for the Port," he announced.

Holder groaned.

"I'm sick," he gagged. "Bunk'll switch her. Hey, you, Bunk, cut the engine off and get that car!"

At any other time this would have been heaven for Bunk Wade. But now leaden feet took him to Holder's seat. He pushed the reverse-lever down indifferently, then poked his head through the window, watching for the signal from the train porter at the tender coupling-lever.

And out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of the rear of a purple body, and a cream-colored wheel embellished with a golden sunburst, the whole peeping out from behind the station-building.

Worst of all, as he moved the engine ahead in response to the signal, the stuttering roar of an unmuffled exhaust smote his ears. Moving parallel to his own course, heading for the crossing, two hundred yards away, the chariot burst upon his view.

In it, snuggling coyly close to Ed Ryan, reposed his lost lady-love. To Bunk the world suddenly turned a more vivid crimson than the running-gear of the car that ran ahead of the 1064.

Down at the crossing the flagman perceived that the engine was about to pass, bound for the switch. He unfolded his banner and displayed it before the approaching chariot of Ed Ryan.

Suddenly commanded to halt, Ryan attempted several more things than were necessary at one time and stalled, directly upon the main track.

That old transmission, sketchily repaired by Holder's amateur hand, had entirely departed this life. When he tried to start, Ryan found nothing doing, save a horrific grind of stripped gears. And that locomotive, looming as large as the State capital at Tallahassee, was bearing down upon him.

Miss Frances Elmora Mignonne Fontaine Woodville Wilson lifted her skirts indiscreetly high, volplaned to safety, and out of this yarn, save for casual later mention.

Ryan and the flagman applied their shoulders to the purple splendor of the body and hove with all their might. But the chariot was anchored. Then they, too, took to the tallest timber available.

Bunk could have stopped the 1064 all right. The independent brake-valve was under his hand, and a hundred feet of track intervened. But his hour had come. A fist went to the throttle and jerked it wide.

With the roar of the exhaust, and the fire flying from under slipping drivers, the powerful engine leaped ahead. Her pilot struck the chariot amidships, lifted and flung.

Brought down to date as to nomenclature, the description of the final appearance of the One Hoss Shay, of immortal memory, will answer nicely as a description of the appearance of Ed Ryan's late car.

A thunderbolt, brandishing a coruscating razor-blade, landed in the gangway of the 1064 before she stopped. Bunk Wade made a lightning reference to the right-hand hip-pocket of his own shore-going pants and leaped joyfully into battle.

The next issue of the Baynesboro *Evening Star* mentioned under the heading of police-court news that two negroes, one of them the fireman of the southbound Citrus Land Special, had been arrested for fighting at the Grove Street crossing the previous night by a railroad officer. Judge De Lane gave them each six months in the chain-gang.

No. 2399, alias Bunker Hill Wade, colored, twenty-nine and single, and No. 2400, one Edward Ryan, also colored, labored shoulder to shoulder in a phosphate-pit. Bound by the tie of a common misfortune, their enmity was buried.

The sun beat mercilessly into that pit, glaring on the white rock. The surrounding scrub effectually cut off all breeze. Perspiration drenched the black and white striped suits in which they were arrayed.

Ryan hove a large chunk of phosphate rock to the deck of a Seaboard forty-thousand flat, then paused to wipe his brow.

"Ah done heard from mah lawyer," he announced to No. 2399. "De railroad ain' goin' gimme nothin' fo' mah car."

"But dey's bound to give yo' somethin'," Wade urged. "You-all had a right on dat crossin'."

"'Pears like *yo'* didn't think so at de time," Ryan observed.

"Ah had a accident wid de throttle, like I done tol' yo' befo'," Bunk retorted indignantly.

"Maybe *so*," Ryan conceded. "Anyhow, de claim-agent, he say Ah didn't had no right on dat crossin' when de flagman say, 'keep back!' He say I been guilty o' conducin' elegance an' de lawyer done claim dat Ah owes him twenty-five dollahs fo' de time he done spent findin' dat out!"

Ryan glanced about disgustedly. "Ain' dis yere a fine place fo' to put a couple o' gemmen what was only settlin' a private argument!" he added

"It sho' is," Bunk agreed feelingly.

"It's all de fault o' dat darn railroad," Ryan stated venomously. "Bunk, some day, you'n me gwine to git even wid dem an' wid dat Dan Holder. On'y fo' him, I'd 'a' had twenty dollahs mo'n what I has!"

"Yassuh, yo' would, an' we is," Bunk affirmed. "We're gwine to git even wid Cap'n Dan. Only fo' him bein' so contrary, *I'd* 'a' had dat car—den dere wouldn't been no smash!"

"Hey, you-all want me to tickle your ribs with this rifle-butt?" queried a languid guard, sprawled in the shade with a Winchester across his knees.

The pair hastily gave their attention to the phosphate industry. Ryan cursing under his breath, Bunk studying.

Any way you looked at it, Holder was to blame. If he had sold Bunk the car there would have been no smash. If he'd had a little sense instead of filling himself full of ice-water and pie and topping the mess with those little red fishes, he wouldn't have got sick and Bunk wouldn't have had opportunity to revenge himself, and he and Ryan would not have been arrested for fighting.

Cap'n Dan should surely have known better than to trust with an engine a darky who had lost all his money the night before and had a gin hang-over besides.

To the ears of Bunk Wade came a long-drawn whistle, a whistle as familiar as the sound of his own voice. He dropped the rock he had lifted and turned to face the open mouth of the pit where the Peninsular main line shimmered in the afternoon heat His face was a study of wistfulness as he waited

Now the roar of the exhaust came to him over the bank. Involuntarily, he tensed his whole body. In the brief space the engine would occupy in crossing the mouth of the pit, he must see as much as possible.

She flashed into view and Bunk stared—hard.

There was Dan Holder, filling his pipe and passing the place where his former fireman suffered durance vile, without so much as a glance. There was Bunk's successor, bending for a scoop of coal and there was the 1064 herself.

The smokestack crown was dull, the jacket but dimly reflected the rays of the sun, and—crowning infamy—the Shriner emblem was *dirty!*

The vision passed and with it passed the most that life could hold for Bunk Wade. On the 1064 was not only liberty, but joy, laughter, and good times; a posturing for the girls along the road, blue overclothes and yellow gauntlets and goggles

And that extra fireman was surely slack. He'd have a week's job to get her in shape when he went back

When he went back! Something hit Bunk mentally, with the force of a high velocity bullet.

He could never go back to the 1064!

Never again would that left foot depress the lever of her automatic fire-door. Never again would he pot-lead the boiler-head; never again tend the shrine. Firemen who got arrested and sent on the chain-gang had better keep away from the master-mechanic at Port Florida.

Bunk stood no show even to be permitted to fire the rickety shifter that worked about the phosphate-pits—let alone go back to the crack train of the South. A queer sound escaped him. He dashed the back of a hand across his eyes.

Then, for the second time in his life, the world turned crimson. Twice within a week, Dan Holder had dashed by that pit without so much as a glance at the phosphate-dusted black toilers in its maw.

That was just like a white man. They boss a fellow around, deprive him of his heart's desire, then, when he gets into trouble, let him sweat.

Bunk could not know, of course, that when Holder had reached Port Florida that night he had halted his car on its homeward way before the door of the master-mechanic, and said to that official

"Johnson, I'm goin' to try to get that fireman o' mine off the gang, and I want you to help."

"Ain't blacks common enough around here without botherin' with that triflin' Bunk Wade?" the M. M. drawled.

"Bunk's not triflin'!" Holder declared indignantly. "He's the best fireman this road ever saw, or will see."

He paused and gave Johnson a defiant, half shamefaced grin.

"When I come by the phosphate-pit, this evenin', he was standing there, staring at the engine like his heart would break," Holder continued.

"Frank, the way he looked gave me the all-overs. When you come to figure it, the fight didn't amount to anything, and maybe the throttle did jam.

"The judge wouldn't know any different, if we both told him it was kind of defective. I believe Bunk was just defendin' himself from felonious assault by that Ed Ryan."

"Anything to accommodate you, Dan," the M. M. assented obligingly.

However, as I remarked, Bunk could know nothing of this conversation. He was lying awake in the shack at the phosphate-pit, thinking incoherent, but bloody thoughts.

Somewhere around two in the morning, he heard a scratching, then a knock against the thin, wooden side of the building. Bunk lay quiet and waited. The noise was repeated; thereafter came a low voice:

"Ed—oh, Ed Ryan!"

Bunk slid out of bed, bent and placed his mouth close to the ground.

"Who's dat?" he inquired in a stage whisper.

"It's me—Coca Cola Ryan," came the

reply. "I wants to talk to Ed mighty bad."

"Wait!" Bunk commanded

He reached up and shook No. 2400, who awakened with a startled grunt.

"Shut yo' mouth, Ed," Bunk warned. "Coke's heah an' wants to talk wid you."

Thereupon Ryan joined Wade on the floor of the shack. Having established communication between the brothers, Wade, with the instinct of a gentleman, withdrew.

Certain things he could not help overhearing as he lay in his bunk, a woman's name, muttered oaths of blood curdling vengeance. Then came a shout from a night guard, the pad of rapidly retreating bare feet upon the sun-baked earth and a shot.

The next minute the door of the shack was flung open and the swearing guard entered and cast a flashlight around. Having established that nobody had made a break, he instituted a search for contraband, but without result.

Silence reigned for a time after the guard had departed. Then, when the regular breathing around him assured privacy, Ed Ryan addressed his partner in explanation.

"Bunk, that there damn Minnie done run away wid a travelin' preacher!"

"Huh!" was Bunk's single comment.

"Furthermo', she done took all the furniture outen mah house an' that talkin'-machine," Ryan continued, his voice hoarse with emotion.

"Ain' yo' give her de talkin'-machine?" Bunk pointed out.

"Ah give it to her fo' while she was mah woman," Ryan assented, "but Ah didn't give it to her fo' when she slopes wid no travelin' preachin' nigger!"

Ryan cursed long and deep.

"Bunk, Ah got to git outer heah an' go after 'em. Ah aims to cahve 'em both!"

"Can't go no mo' dis night," Bunk cautioned him. "Guards is mighty lively right now."

"Ah can't wait long Ah'm smellin' blood," Ryan rejoined.

At dinner the next day Ryan found opportunity to speak aside with Bunk.

"Do dat—Holder come north dis evenin'?"

"Naw, dis is his day off he comes tomorrer evenin'," Bunk rejoined.

"Ah'll be ready fo' him—Ah done made mah plans," Ryan stated, his lips twitching curiously and the whites of his eyes very prominent.

Bunk perceived that brooding over his manifold wrongs had worked Ryan up to a frenzy; that he was in a fit state of mind for a "killin'." Some vibration, subtle and elusive, communicated itself to his own breast.

The instincts of his remote, savage ancestors of the African jungle, creatures of whim and impulse, awoke within him. His own nostrils began to dilate, his eyes rolled a trifle—but he asked no questions.

During the ensuing night Ryan sneaked cautiously out of the shack without saying a word to Bunk. But Wade was quite serene. Ryan was not making his break yet. He would be back.

Consequently, he composed himself to more slumber, dreaming sweet dreams of revenge upon Dan Holder. When the guard turned out the gang Ryan was in his proper place.

Through that morning Ryan worked steadily and well, as though eager to establish a good reputation with the languid guard. Bunk imitated him by instinct.

All the convicts in the pit were short-termers, none of them were likely to bother with an attempt at escape, and the guard's chief duty was to keep them working. Those that labored steadily escaped more than his perfunctory attention.

And as Ryan worked with his hands, his lips twitched and his eyes rolled and those subtle emanations went from him to Bunk Wade, so that Bunk's nerves vibrated in sympathy. Bunk had a hunch that he would not sleep that night in the pit-shack.

The reward of Ryan's diligence came when the gang was turned to, after dinner. There were three cars of rock down at the switch, near the main line, that Ryan knew would have to be trimmed for shipment that afternoon.

And because he and Bunk had labored so faithfully and well the guard assigned them this comparatively light duty. It was his custom thus to dole out premiums.

Both toiled industriously for an hour, then the guard strolled to the upper end of the pit, out of sight. The next instant Ryan quit. He thrust a hand inside his striped shirt and furtively produced something.

"Bunk, heah's where me an' yo' fixes that damn Holder, an' goes elsewhere," he whispered savagely, at the same time displaying two brown cylinders.

"Dinnamite!" Bunk whispered back, shrinking a trifle.

"Sixty per cent—de stuff whut day's usin' in de new pit," Ryan affirmed, digging up two primers.

Thereupon, Bunk perceived what had been Ryan's errand in the night. Also, the sight of those two brown cylinders filled him with a fierce elation.

He scarcely required Ryan's hurriedly whispered explanations, as he bored the explosive with a bit of wood and fixed the primers, each in the end of a stick.

"Ah places dese babies in de frog o' de south switch. When Holder come along an' hit 'em—goo'-by Mr. White Man, goo'-by de railroad's fancy train. Holder won' take no mo' extra twenty dollars offen no other nigger!"

"'Deed he won't," Bunk chuckled

That Holder wouldn't lend him thirty dollars, wouldn't sell him no car threw waste at his head. Now he'd go a sailin'!

"When de bang come, all hands run to de spot," Ryan continued, concealing the dynamite once more. "On'y me an' you. We goes for dat little ol' switcher an' yo escohts us elsewhere—den Miss Minnie Wilson an' her yaller preacher better watch out!"

Chuckling and mumbling, he slipped off the car and started stealthily for the switch.

"If de guard come, holler like a mockin'-bird," he directed.

One eye on the place where the guard must appear, the other on Ryan, Bunk waited, crouched in the car, his chest heaving. Only a little time now—then vengeance, full and complete!

He watched Ryan cunningly place the sticks of dynamite in the switch-frog. He shut his eyes, picturing the moment when the pony truck-wheels of the 1064 should roll over that frog.

"When we hears her comin' me an' you'll stroll behin' de bank," said Ryan's voice in his ear. "Goin' be some bang, Bunk Wade!"

Some bang was right.

Another hour passed. The sun beat down on the shining rails of the main line. Bunk and Ryan labored steadily and calmly, to all outward appearances as tractable a pair of short-termers as ever breathed phosphate-dust. The guard gave them one casual inspection, then strolled back to the sheltering shade of the pit.

Two miles away, blowing for Phosphate Station, Bunk heard the well-known whistle of his beloved 1064. Three minutes passed; the cough of her exhaust as she pulled out vibrated through the sultry air.

Unconsciously, Bunk waited for the softening of the sound when Holder hooked her back. He could just see Cap'n Dan reaching for the reverse-lever.

Now—he had hooked her back, and that new, slack fireman was putting in a fire. Look at that cloud of smoke over the trees. Did the fool want to choke her?

Ed Ryan climbed out of the car and started for the shelter of the bank. "C'm' on—whut yo' waitin' fo'?" he called.

What was Bunk waiting for? He didn't know, yet he lingered on, his gaze riveted to the point where the engine must appear around the curve through the oak scrub.

The pilot and front end showed. The sun glinted dully on the copper stack-crown.

As the engine swayed, the Shriner emblem flashed a vagrant, sickly gleam.

Holder was pushing her now, taking a run for the grade beyond the pit. The separate exhausts had merged into a steady roar.

Time he was moving! She'd hit that frog pretty quick now. Bunk hastily clambered off the car, his gaze still on the engine. Why didn't Cap'n Dan put some ginger into that fireman? That bell was a disgrace!

Never mind, though. In a minute, fifty seconds, all that bright work would have ceased to exist. So would Dan Holder, so would a hundred odd other souls, white and colored—but these others had never entered Bunk's head at any stage.

He found his legs running—but they were

running the wrong way, carrying him straight to the switch. He tried to swerve. He was crazy!

But the legs were inexorable, they kept him headed straight for those sinister cylinders jammed in the frog

Behind the bank Ed Ryan sensed that things were not going according to program. He yelled.

The guard heard the yell, swerved and saw a nigger breaking for liberty. He threw his rifle to his shoulder, pumped the lever twice after the first shot.

Then Ryan, gone wholly amuck, dashed from behind the bank, picked up a chunk of rock and, holding it poised shoulder-high, ready for a cast, raced toward the switch himself.

The Shriner emblem — all that bright work—Cap'n Dan! Bunk sobbed as he ran.

His legs were moving, but the 1064 was *flying*. Something stabbed through his left thigh. He stumbled, picked himself up.

An angry bee hummed past him. A third grazed his skull.

Still he ran forward, although his head was curiously light and a flowing wetness underfoot made him slip and falter repeatedly. Cap'n Dan and the 1064—going to glory together!

The pilot was not twenty feet from the frog. He visioned Holder, suddenly risen to his feet in the cab, white-faced, staring at him—and beyond him at the frog. Cap'n Dan—his best friend!

The ground flew up and hit him. He clawed desperately with outflung, groping hands. One cartridge—the second—he flung them away with all his force.

Crash! The world rocked -hot water—a grinding roar of passing wheels—

" And I done tried to kill him," the guard mourned as they placed the unconscious Bunk in the stone-riddled baggage-car. " I never tumbled no way until after the third shot, when I seen the other prisoner runnin' afteh him with a chunk of rock. Wonder what become o' him?" he added reflectively, looking around.

" Some of him's there," said Dan Holder, pointing to the train.

All hands looked. There was not a whole pane of glass in the cars, there were numerous people nursing cuts and bruises, but fortunately, however, there was nobody seriously injured.

" Gentlemen, as I hope to be judged hereafter, when Bunk threw that dynamite clear, it hit Ryan's head and went off!" the runner continued solemnly.

And by certain signs upon the cars the crowd was fain to believe that he spoke the truth.

If you ride the Citrus Land Special into the best country in the world next winter, and you have time while you are in Jaxville Terminal, stroll forward and see if the 1064 is hooked to the head end.

If she is, ask the dusky scoop-handler the time. Take careful note of the way he hauls out his watch, peeking to see if you are noticing.

And you better notice. If you don't, you'll miss seeing the finest time-keeper that the president of the Peninsular could buy with the accumulated cash of his own pockets and those of the entire board of directors.

They happened to be riding behind Holder that afternoon.

And if you want to make a real hit, ask to be permitted to read the inscription that covers the entire inside of the case with finely graven script. After that, the chances are that Holder will invite you to share his seat as far as you are going, so that you may hear the yarn first hand.

WORK OR FIGHT.

BY SAMUEL G. CAMP.

The Frisco Kid Learns That Little Cupid Is a Wicked Battler Who Packs a Knock-Out Wallop.

'LL say you would have to go some to find a man with a better eye for an athalete than I. And so the first time I seen this here Frisco Kid, the time he knocks Battlin' Klein for a home run in seventeen seconds from the bell, right off the bat I knowed he was a world-beater

Well, just then I didn't have no regular job, on account of the old Airplane League havin' crashed right in the middle of the season; and I hear where the Frisco Kid hasn't no manager as yet, and so it looks like here is my chance. Of course, I haven't never had no great amount of experience in the fight game, but that doesn't make no difference, because I am a natural born athalete myself, and so I take to anythin' in this kind of line like a duck to water, and so I knowed I could get away with it.

Anyways, I'll say this bird Battlin' Klein is still dead to the world when I gets the Kid's ear and puts it up to him. I tell him he's makin' one big mistake fightin' under his own management, because nobody ever gets anywheres that way, and if he'll hook up with me—of course, it doesn't make no difference to me, and he can take it or leave it, only I'll say it looks to me like the Kid has the goods, and I'll tell the world fair I'm the guy to sell 'em—if he'll stick to me the both of us will wear diamonds.

Well, the Kid hands me the up and down like as if to say well, whoever heard of you, and believe me, you got a nerve; but just then I guess he must of remembered somethin', because he says listen, the gang that's runnin' this show is holdin' out fifty berries on him, and if I can collect them fifty bucks I get the job, because, take it from the Kid, I got about as much chance of collectin' them fifty fish as a cigarette in a front-line trench.

"Wait here," I says to the Kid.

Five minutes afterward I comes back with my clothes most tore off of me, and hands the Kid the money.

"Thanks," says the Kid. "But, say, listen! Of course, if you say so, I'll stick by what I said. But, look! Maybe we're makin' a mistake. Believe me, anybody that can strong-arm that bunch of bandits outa fifty bucks— Say! You do the fightin' and leave me do the managin'!"

But I says no, I wouldn't go through the same experience again for a guarantee of one hundred thousand dollars, win, lose, or draw, and so we'll stick to the original agreement. And now let's go see a doctor, and then afterward we can talk business.

And I guess I have showed the kid and them birds that was tryin' to hold out on him, and I'll say they was a bunch of tough ones, whether that is exactly what I mean or not -business.

Well, the way things turns out proves that when I pick the Frisco Kid for a winner I am some picker; and when the Kid chooses a manager—well, I'll say he was some chooser. Because the upshot of it is, in less than a year's time I an' the Kid has fit our way right up there to the top; or, anyways—

Well, it's like this:

Somethin' less than a year, like I said, finds I and the Kid in a trainin'-camp up Connecticut way -and the Kid all signed up and everythin' for a ten-round brawl with this here Kid Harris, which is the only guy that stands between the Frisco Kid and

a chance at Benny Mossman, the champion.

You get the idea. All I and the Kid has to do is trim this here Kid Harris, and then beat the daylights outa this bird Mossman, and—there we are! The lightweight champion!

I'll admit this here Mossman is one tough bird; but, leave it to me, we can take him. And as for Mr. Kid Harris, I'll say he's a moral for the Frisco Kid, provided the Kid is in any kind of shape; and, believe me, I propose to see that he is.

So you can see for yourself where I and the Kid is right on that old road to fame and fortune and everythin'. But ain't it the truth? Somebody is always takin' the joy outa life.

One minute—well, take it from me, this is the life! And the next—oh, boy!

Just the minute I lamp that dame I see right away where no matter whether we win, lose, or draw with Kid Harris—or Mossman, either, for that matter—it's all off! All off!

Because, y' know, they's dames and—dames. And as for this one—

But anyways, one mornin', say maybe ten days or so before we're due to go up against this bird Harris, I blows into the gym to give the Kid the once-over whilst he's takin' his mornin' workout; and I hadn't no more than set eyes on him when I see where somethin' has went wrong. The Kid is goin' at his work like as if havin' your tooth pulled, or somethin', would be a pleasure compared to it. He has about as much ambition as a corpse. Compared to him a, now, mummy is a live wire.

Now the Kid was always a bear for work, and all you can do to hold him back, instead of vice-president or whatever it is, the way it is with most of these so-called fighters; and so right away I tumbles to the trouble. For some days the Kid has been right on edge, right in that old pink of condition; and now, like it sometimes happens when your man gets into that kind of shape too soon before the fight, the Kid has went over the top—stale.

Well, of course, they wasn't only one thing to do; and, of course, they's still plenty of time; and so I tell the Kid to forget it, and take the first train for the city, and treat himself to some regular eats and maybe a coupla glasses of buttermilk or somethin', but not more, and take in a coupla shows, only don't stay up too late, and everythin'; and I'll expect him back to-morrow afternoon.

And the Kid says he'll do each and all of them little things, and blows. Of course, I knowed where the Kid wasn't the kind that would try to put anythin' over on you. In or out of the ring, I'll say the Frisco Kid is a perfect gentleman and a, now, model of propriety. But they's been several times when if they had got me right—I mean the cops—I would of went to Bellevue or somewhere for observation, like they say; and this here was one of 'em.

Just why I didn't trail along with the Kid on this here little break in trainin', as you might say—well, you can search me. But I didn't; and—

It's along about 2 P.M. the followin' afternoon. I'm sittin' on the piazza of Brown's place, where I and the Kid hangs out, fightin' a war cigar and gettin' the worst of it, and keepin' an eye out for the Kid.

I'm expectin' he'll arrive by jitney from the village, after the one forty-five accommodation; and he's about due to show.

All of a sudden, from down around the corner of the road, they's a serious of screeches like a fire-siren went crazy, and enough to make your hair stand right up on end; and a yeller roadster that makes a, now, pumpkin look a kind of pale white in comparison—a yeller roadster with all of four red wheels rounds the corner on one of 'em, dashes up the straightaway, still emittin' them unearthly screams at every step, and comes to a sudden stop right in front of me

"Greetin's, Mac!" somebody hails me.

And—well, on the level, you could of knocked me over with a feather. It's the Kid!

And sittin' beside him—oh, boy!

I'll say I get this dame's number in thirty seconds—whilst they're unloadin' and climbin' the steps—and you could of clocked me. At that, I don't lay claim to no superhuman intelligence. 'Most any-

body could of seen at a glance where, for instance, she's a lady—of the, now, ensemble. Chorus is wrote all over her.

If her make-up had give her face a chance maybe she might of been good-lookin'. Who knows?

As it is, startin' in with the framework that nature has supplied her with, and workin' up from there with care and sufficient grease-paint, like they call it, and a lip-stick, like I guess it is, and that stuff you put on your eyelashes, so I've heard—well, she has arrived at a certain effect; and if that's the kind of effect you like, why, that's the kind of effect you like. And I admire your taste—and the Kid's.

But I'll say not for me!

As for the rest, there ain't much of it, but what there is—I'm referrin' to what she has on, and off—as for the rest, you can search me how she ever gets this far from the city without bein' pinched as a deserter from the well-known Rainbow Division.

And she comes in what is known as show-girl size, if you know what I mean.

"Allow me," says the Kid. "Miss Cissy Leroy, Mr. McDuffy."

Well, I didn't have on no hat, but I removes the cigar and says I'm glad to meet her which, believe me, I wasn't, and far from it.

And I guess the pleasure must of been mutual, because she certainly greets me with some of this hauteur stuff that you've heard about.

Y' understand, right from now on it looks like it's a question of which of us is the Kid's manager, I or she; and nobody is wiser to that fact than Mr. McDuffy and Miss Cissy Leroy.

A man wouldn't want no better evidence that this dame has the Kid vamped to a fare-you-well than the way he looks at her. I'll say you wouldn't! And maybe Miss Cissy Leroy may have an idea I'm crazy, but she knows I ain't blind nor foolish Nothin' like that.

"I—ah—now—I brung Miss Leroy out to see me work this afternoon," the Kid volunteers.

"I get you," I says. "Fine! And you certainly brung her out in style," I says, shadin' my eyes and lookin' at that yeller roadster. "Some car!"

"You said somethin'," says the Kid. "A bargain!"

"Yeh," I says. "It looks it. Whose is it?"

"Mine!" he says. "Y' see, Mac, it's like this. Now—well, yesterday afternoon I takes in a show like you tell me to—the, now, Parisian Jollities. Well, Miss Leroy, here, she's workin', in the show; and I—well, the guy that goes to the show with me says he's met her; and so—well, after the show I and she gets acquainted—see?"

"I follow you," I says.

"Well," the Kid goes on, "come night I remember where you tell me to take in a *coupla* shows—you remember, Mac?—and so, well, I goes to the Parisian Jollities."

"What?" I says. "Again?"

"Sure," says the Kid. "Ain't that what you said? Take in two shows? And didn't I do it?"

"Ah-hah," I says. "You did. But believe me, next time I'll specify."

"And so then," says the Kid, "after the evenin's performance I and Miss Leroy just happens to meet up again somehow—"

"Speakin' of remarkable coincidences," I puts in

"And then," he says, "it crossed my mind how you tell me to be sure and get me a coupla glasses of buttermilk—you remember, Mac?—and so I ast her wouldn't she maybe like to go to Weisenwebber's with me and see have they got any buttermilk, or anythin', and maybe if they haven't we can find somethin' that will do just as well.

"Come to find out," he says, "they didn't have no buttermilk; but—well, anyways, the upshot of it is—of course, by this time, y' understand, Miss Leroy knows all about me, and how I got that old championship on ice just the minute I can lay a glove on this here Benny Mossman, and everythin'—the upshot of it is, I ast her wouldn't she like to come out here and see me work.

"She says fine, and what kind of a car do I drive? Well, of course, I seen where I was up against it unless—I mean I says well, just at present I haven't got no car,

but I've been thinkin' of pickin' one up for some time; in fact, that's one of the things that brung me to the city. And maybe to-morrow mornin', if she wouldn't mind goin' along with me and help me pick out a car, why—"

"I get you," I says. Can you beat it? "But listen here," I says. "I wanna tell you somethin'. You can take it from me, this here joy-ridin' thing, and winnin' that old championship, like you say, don't mix worth a cent; and—"

"You needn't to worry about that," says the Kid. "I've give Miss Leroy the use of the car till we're—now—married."

"*What?*" I howls. "Married! What d'ye mean, married?"

"What *would* I mean, married?" he fires back at me. "Divorced? Sure, we fixes it up whilst we're drivin' out here just now."

"Well, of course, y' understand, under the circumstances, it wouldn't never do for me to say what I felt, even if I had had the ability; and so—

"Fine!" I says. "Congratulations! Some speed! Some—speed! And just when d'you figure this here little event is comin' off?"

"Oh," says the Kid, "as soon as I've won the championship."

Well, I'll say that helps some! The way things was progressin' I'm expectin' to see a dominy crash into the scenery the very next instant!

But you can't never tell; maybe a lotta things might happen betwixt the Kid and the championship. Still and all—

But anyways—

"Y' see, Mac, it's like this," says the Kid. "Just the very minute I laid eyes on Cis—Miss Leroy—"

"Aw, cut the confession stuff, Kid," says Miss Leroy, "and see if you can't rustle me a san'wich or somethin', and a little somethin' on the side—get me? On the level, I'm all in!"

"Sure!" says the Kid. "Right this way, dear," says the poor fish; and the two of 'em fades.

Well, I'll tell the old world fair and square, this here is one heluva jam I'm in! Ain't it the truth? Once the Kid wins the championship, and it's up to me to see that he does it—what else can I do?—and I'll say the Kid will trim Harris and Mossman, the both of 'em, as sure as fate—once the Kid lands the pennant and marries this here Miss Cissy Leroy—

Well, judgin' from what I've seen of Miss Cissy Leroy, which is a plenty, they's only one way I know how to say it:

Good—night—Kid!

And of course, all this doesn't affect in the slightest anybody that happens to be the Kid's manager—such as me. Oh, not in the slightest! If things works out like I've every reason to believe they will, all I lose is my job.

That's all—absolutely.

And you can search me where's the way out!

At that, in a way, you have to hand it to Miss Cissy Leroy. I'll say she's some swift worker! Here she's only knowed the Kid less than thirty-six hours, and already—but you've got the facts.

Now the papers has been givin' the Frisco Kid's comin' battle with this here Kid Harris a big play, on account of the winner bein' slated to go up against Mr. Mossman, the well-known champion; and so public interest runs high, like they say.

I hear where there's already a lot of bettin', mostly at evens. And I'll say a lotta bugs must of broke loose from some asylum, or somethin', somewhere; because anybody that would bet their good money on Kid Harris against the Frisco Kid, at evens, is certainly crazy. I'll say they are.

But anyways, the consequences is, each and every afternoon they's a big gallery present to watch the Kid work out with his sparrin' partners. And this afternoon is no exception.

By the time the Kid is ready to take on the first of them human punchin'-bags they's a line of cars parked out in front of Brown's place like a weddin'; and the gym is packed till you can't hardly breathe.

Well, I haven't no kick comin' on that, because I'm chargin' them birds fifty cents a head to get in; not just on account of the money, y' understand, but just to keep out the tramps and professional loafers, and such as them.

Still, I'll say every little bit helps—you know it!—and what I and the Kid picks up at these here matinées goes quite a ways toward defrayin' our trainin' expenses.

Yes, sir; every little bit helps. Though, of course, if it wasn't on account of keepin' out them riffraffs—

But, anyways, just before the Kid is ready to take on the first of them choppin' blocks, I tell him where he better go a little easy this afternoon, on account of the lay-off, and everythin'; and besides, I'll say what this gang doesn't know about the Kid's real form won't hurt them.

You get the idea.

Of course, I wasn't lookin' for no sucker bets on this here Kid Harris—nothin' like that—because I knowed I couldn't get them. And besides, I don't never bet; that is, except

But, anyways, so, like I says, I tell the Kid to lay off of these pork-and-beaners that's workin' with him, and take it easy, and just work up a nice sweat, and leave it go at that.

"Leave it to me," says the Kid.

So I leaves it to him; and—*boy!*

On the level, what the Kid done to them birds was a crime! And I'll say they was tough birds at that, all three of 'em! For maybe ten minutes, includin' time out for draggin' one guy outa the ring and a new one get into it, you can take it from me, the Kid gives one of the greatest exhibitions of the grand old art of self-defense—if that's what you call it—that was ever seen!

Talk about speed—and punch! Oh, lady! For a fact, I always knowed the Kid was good; but I'll say, myself, I never knowed he was *that* good! It was one of them regular—now—revelations you hear about.

And it's all over in hardly no time—them three sparrin' partners of the Kid's sittin' on the floor hangin' onto their jaw the Kid sure did treat 'em rough—and the crowd filin' out and tellin' each other that Kid Harris won't be nothin' but only just a workout for the Kid, and if he ever gets into the same ring with the champion, believe them, their good money goes on the Kid!

Mossman? As sure as you're a foot high, the Kid will murder him!

Well, I don't know as I should worry; because, like I said, I'm not lookin' for no sucker bets. Just at present I'm not lookin' for no money—well, not particularly. All I want is the championship! Leave me have that, and I guess the money will take care of itself. I'll say it will!

Still and all, though I can't see where's the difference, it's a cinch the Kid has tipped his mitt.

Just for instance, whilst the crowd is movin' out, I hear one guy, a kind of sporty-lookin' duck in a checked suit, say to another:

"Believe me, I wish I had the bird here that put me onto Kid Harris to win against this Frisco Kid! What I wouldn't do to him! Y' know, I've played a plumb thousand on this Harris thing, and believe me, I can't afford to lose it! I gotta do somethin'! But you can search me—"

I didn't get the rest of it; but you get the idea.

Yes, sir; the Kid has certainly throwed a scare into some of them birds! And all because—but, of course, you've guessed it, the same as I—just simply because Miss Cissy Leroy is amongst them present, and the Kid feels like he has to *show* her—get me?

Anyways, it's a pipe where, if the beautiful Miss Leroy had been right there in a ringside seat, the Kid wouldn't never of pulled no such stuff as he did; and so then, if he hadn't went and cut loose like that, why—

But anyways, after that things runs along for maybe a week or so about the same as usual, except that when the—now—Parisian Jollities, isn't playin' a matinée, Miss Cissy Leroy drops in on us every now and then, in that yeller roadster, and a hired showfer to drive her; and believe me, I see where the Kid has a pretty bill to pay

Take it from Cissy, if the Kid's affections takes a skid, it won't be no fault of hers. She's right there on the job every possible moment. He never had a chance.

Well, I guess Miss Leroy should of worried. The Kid is so far gone that, to say

the least, I seen where they wasn't nothin' you could do about it. Not a thing. So I never says a word. I simply leaves the Kid dream on.

And so then finally it gets down to the last day before the battle with this here Kid Harris. That afternoon I and the Kid is sittin' out on the piazza, takin' in the scenery and everythin', when a car stops in front of the house and a guy climbs out of it.

Somehow it seems like I've seen this bird before—or have I? Well, you can search me. I can't seem to recollect.

Anyways, he approaches us and says:

"Is this Mr. McDuffy?"

"You win," I says.

"Mr. McDuffy," he says, "my name is —now—Perkins. Henry H. Perkins. I live about five miles from here. Maybe you've heard of me—Henry H. Perkins?"

"I can't say as I have," I says. "But—pleased to meetcha, Mr. Perkins. Have a chair. What's the idea?"

"Thanks," he says. "Well, Mr. McDuffy, I've—ah—now—come on a rather peculiar errand. By the way, is this gentleman the famous boxer I've heard so much about—the—ah—Frisco Kid?"

"Ah-ha," I says; "it's him. Kid, shake hands with Mr. Perkins."

Well, I dunno. You can search me why I wastes time and—now—politeness on this bird like this; but I guess may be right off the reel I must of got a hunch where they was a chance to shake this guy down for a coupla bucks or so—and you know every little bit helps. I can't explain it in no other way.

Anyways, him and the Kid shakes, and then he says:

"Well, as I was sayin', Mr. McDuffy, I've come on a sorta peculiar errand. It's like this. Y' see, I've been havin' all kinds of trouble with my boy Harold."

It begins to look after all like I'm up against a nut. I'll say I should worry about Mr. Henry H. Perkins's boy Harold! However

"You follow me?" he says.

"After a fashion," I says. "Your boy Harold. Harold sorta goin' the pace or somethin', what?"

"Exactly," he says. "I can't seem to do nothin' with him; and he's ruinin' his health and his constitution. Y' know, Mr. McDuffy, Harold wasn't never very strong, anyways, but always kinda pale and sickly-lookin', and kinda—now—tubercular; and I guess his heart isn't all that it had ought to be—"

"Too bad, too bad," I says. "I'm sorry to hear it. But listen. I guess you're makin' some mistake. What you need is a—now—doctor, or somethin'. An ax, maybe. I'll say it looks like Harold is outa my line entirely. Believe me—"

"Wait," says Mr. Henry H. Perkins. "You don't understand me. As I was sayin', Harold wasn't never what you might call exactly husky—why, he weighs less than a hundred and twenty pounds this very minute—but still, y' understand, Mr. McDuffy, they ain't really nothin' so awful serious the matter of him. And if he would tend to business, and cut out playin' round nights, like he does—"

"Sure!" I says. "Sure! But—you'll excuse me—but what have I gotta do with all this? I'll say I sympathize with you; but—what's the point?"

"It's right here," says Mr. Henry H. Perkins. "When the draft comes along Harold manages to get into one of the deferred classes—get me? But now they're beginnin' to enforce this work-or-fight rule, and

"Listen, Mr. McDuffy! My family is one of the most famous in this county; and we've got a war record to be proud of. You see what I mean? The Perkinses has always done their bit right from Revolutionary times down to—"

"But not includin'—" I says.

"Harold," he says. "You said it, Mr McDuffy! That boy simply refuses to either work *or* fight, and nobody can't do nothin' with him! And pretty soon it's gonna come right down to this: the local draft board is gonna get after Harold, and—think of the disgrace, Mr. McDuffy!

"A member of the grand old Perkins family havin' to be *forced* to do his bit in the greatest war in all history! Forced! Why, Mr. McDuffy, it 'll take us Perkinses *centuries* to live it down—if ever'

I'll tell the world, Mr. McDuffy, it's a shame and a disgrace! And—"

"Say!" I says, gettin' an idea. "What your boy Harold needs is one whale of a good thrashin' and *see* whether he'll work or fight! Get me?"

"I'll say I do!" he says. "In fact, that's just what I'm here for. Listen! I'd heard how you and the great boxer, the Frisco Kid, was stayin' here at Brown's, and this mornin' I was thinkin' things over, and all of a sudden it comes to me.

"If it was put right up to Harold," I says to myself, to either go to work in one of them munition plants, or somewhere, or else fight this here Frisco Kid and take one fine pastin'—work or fight, hey, Mr. McDuffy? what would he do? Of course, Harold has heard of the Frisco Kid, and—well, I leave it to you."

"What would he do?" I says. "He'd go lookin' for a job so fast he'd set himself afire! But—"

"Ain't it the truth?" says Mr. Henry H. Perkins. "And listen, Mr. McDuffy! I'm willin' to pay liberally!"

"You mean—say, what d'ye know about that!" I says. "You wanna have I and the Kid—"

"I want you and the Kid to drive out to my place with me right now," he says. "And we'll put it up to him Harold. Work or fight, hey? Believe me, that 'll fetch him!

"And understand, I don't expect you to do it for nothin'. I'm willin' to pay—handsomely.

Well, bein' paid handsomely for just ridin' ten miles or so on a pleasant afternoon like this, in a regular up-to-date car with all the modern improvements, and a comedy sketch betwixt Harold and the Kid throwed in free gratis—

"H-m!" I says. "Just what—"

"How would a hundred bucks strike you?" says Mr. Perkins. "Of course, they's just a chance—the boy might be desperate—"

Well, maybe he might, at the idea of goin' to work—

"And show fight, which if he does it's the first time it has happened in his life," says Mr. Perkins. "And if he does, why, the Kid might maybe have to hand him a couple.

"And—well, I should say a hundred had ought to pay you for your trouble. Y' understand, Mr. McDuffy, as the boy's father, I certainly hate to do anythin' like this. But it's for his own good; and—"

"Sure," I says. "I get you. It's tough—sure!"

One hundred bucks—and every little bit helps! Suppose little Harold does get mussy and the Kid has to hand him a coupla nasty slaps just to show we mean business and it's work or fight for Harold's? Well, I should say fifty berries per slap is fair pay, and—

"Well, how about it?" asks Mr. Henry H. Perkins.

"Let's go!" I says.

Well, the Kid is game, because he's already sufficiently acquainted with Miss Cissy Leroy to know where money is no object to her when it comes to spendin' it, and so the Kid can use his end of them hundred fish all right enough; and so then we climbs into Mr. Perkins's car, and—

"Just a minute!" says the Kid. "What d'ye call this place where we're goin'? Y' see, I'm expectin' a lady friend later this afternoon, and if she was to come whilst I'm away maybe she might get sore; and so I wanna leave word here where to find me, and so then if she arrives before we get back she can drive out and meet me."

"Fair enough," says Mr. Perkins. "People around here calls it the old Bullard place; a big white house, at the four corners, straight ahead."

So then we leaves word that we've went to the old Bullard place, and—well, a short ride brings us there.

They's a rube mowin' the lawn, and Mr. Perkins asks him:

"Where's the boy?"

"The last I knowed," says the hick, "he was in the—now—gymnasium."

Well, I was gonna ask him what kind of a dump this is anyways, and where does he get that gymnasium stuff, but—

"Y' understand, Mr. McDuffy," says Henry H., "I've done everythin' anybody could do for that boy to try and get him to brace up and be a man—includin' fittin'

up a regular gymnasium for him where he could exercise and see if maybe he couldn't get a little muscle on him. But listen! This here is the first time I've ever heard of his steppin' foot inside of it!"

"Oh, well," I says, "they has to be a first time for everythin'. Maybe he's figurin' on takin' a brace—who knows?"

Well, we finds Harold, like the rube says, in the gym. And I'll tell the world, when Mr. Henry H. Perkins says Harold's health ain't all that it had ought to be—well, judgin' from appearances, I'll say Mr. Henry H. Perkins says a boat-load!

Pale and sickly lookin', and sorta—now—tubercular like, and everythin', is right! This guy has a complexion like a sick fish; they ain't meat enough on him anywhere to keep his bones from stickin' out everywhere; and if they's a muscle in his whole frame, believe me, it would baffle science to find it.

His hair is kinda long and black and stringy, and as for his features they isn't such that you would hardly distinguish them, except— Listen! I'll go on record right now, this bird has one bad eye! Two of 'em!

Yes, sir; so far as everythin' but—now—physical condition is concerned, you can take it from me, Harold is one tough proposition! One bad guy!

He's sittin' all slopped over in a chair, his hands, wrapped up in a pair of boxin'-gloves, hangin' limp and lifeless over his knees, and a cigarette danglin' from his lower lip—and one eye squinted against the smoke. And his clothes consists of a pair of boxin'-trunks.

And when I and the Kid and Mr. Henry H. Perkins blows in, Harold never bats an eye. He never makes a move. He simply hands us the evil eye and—sits there.

"Listen, Harold," says Mr. Henry H. Perkins. "These gentlemen is Mr. McDuffy, the celebrated manager, and the Frisco Kid, the great fighter.

And little Harold treats himself to a sneer in our direction.

"Harold," says Mr. Perkins, "the time has came when nobody couldn't reasonably expect me to put up with the way you've been goin' on no longer. And so—"

Well, he proceeds to put it up to Harold.

"Huh!" says Harold, when Mr. Perkins concludes. "Work or fight, hey? Where d'ye get that stuff? Think I'm gonna fall for any bluff like that? Guess again! Whoever heard of this here Frisco Kid, anyhow? So you think you can lick me, do you, you big stiff! Well, I'd like to see you try it! Just you try to lay a finger on me, you—"

And say! If they's anythin' that Harold fails to call the Kid, you can search me. And well, of course, you couldn't expect the Kid to take that kind of talk from nobody, not if you knowed his temper; and he's already sailin' into Harold when I grabs him

"Here!" I says. "Put these on, and take off your coat!" And I hands him a pair of boxin'-mitts that lays handy. "You might hurt your hands—on the bone. And listen, Kid! Go easy! Pull your punches! You might kill him! But I'll say if you wanna hand this bird a trimmin', you've got my permission! That's what we're here for, and—go to it!"

Somehow I takes a regular dislike to this Harold guy right off the reel. Yes, sir; I'll say it will do me good to see him Harold get one real good spank . . . he needs it!

But—well, I guess I needn't of told the Kid to go to it. Believe me, Harold brings it right to the Kid! He's outa that chair in one spring, like a panther, and, on the level, the way he starts throwin' them gloves at the Kid, I never seen nothin' like it! *Boy!*

The Kid can't do nothin' but cover up. Listen! Back in the old days when Terry—Terrible Terry McGovern—was a fightin' fool, a ravin' crazy combination of cyclone, tiger, and greased lightnin', on the dead level he was a born cripple compared to this kid Harold! He's a murderer!

Of course, nobody clocks 'em, but I'll say in the space of one round, or three minutes, Harold throws every variety of punch known to the game, and some new ones he must of invented, one thousand times apiece at the Kid; and, of course, the Kid stops some of 'em, but the ones he didn't—well, they was sufficient!

Get me? Almost before I realize it the Kid is down and out. Clean! Dead to the world!

Can you beat it? I'll say you can't!

"Work or fight, hey?" snarles Harold, and resumes his cigarette and strolls outa the room.

"Say," I says, straightenin' up from viewin' the remains, "what's the big idea? What's the meanin' of "

But then I seen where I might just as well save my breath I'm alone! Nobody but I and the Kid and believe me, he's poor company. Mr Henry H. Perkins has faded!

But I'm not alone for long. I'm still workin' over the Kid, which is still out and gone to the races—and in the mean time pullin' some deep stuff, because, of course, I know where I've been framed—but who and why?—when nobody else but Miss Cissy Leroy rushes in. I guess the rube out in front must of directed her.

"Where's the Kid?" she inquires.

"Right here!" I says, movin' one side. "Take a look!"

She gives him the glassy once-over.

"Some champion!" she sneers then! "*Some—champion!*"

"Listen!" I says. "Is that—now—your partin' message to the Kid?"

"It is!" she says, and blows.

Well, anyways, I says to myself, win, lose, or draw—and, of course, the battle with Kid Harris and everythin' is all off—well, anyways, I says, exit Miss Cissy Leroy!

And I wouldn't be surprised if, after all, that was the big idea!

Well, I and the Kid moves back to the city, where the Kid can get expert treatment for what ails him, which is almost everythin' except the—now—bubonic plague; and I puts in a week or so figurin' who is Harold, and where does he get it? And also *et cetera.*

Then one day I'm in a place along with a friend of mine, name of Ed Bond, when a guy blows in, and—

It's that bird in the checked suit that I hear tellin' somebody how he has played a thousand bucks on Kid Harris, and how he regrets it—that day when the Kid cuts loose and shows Miss Cissy Leroy. You remember

Yeh, and it's also Mr. Henry H. Perkins!

If he had wore that checked suit the day he called around for I and the Kid to help reform little Harold, of course, I would of recognized him. As it was—

"Look, Ed," I says, "who's that bird that just blowed in?"

"Him?" says Ed. "Why, that only the luckiest guy in the world! He bets a thousand berries on Kid Harris to beat the Frisco Kid, and the fight is called off. He's a guy by the name of Moore.

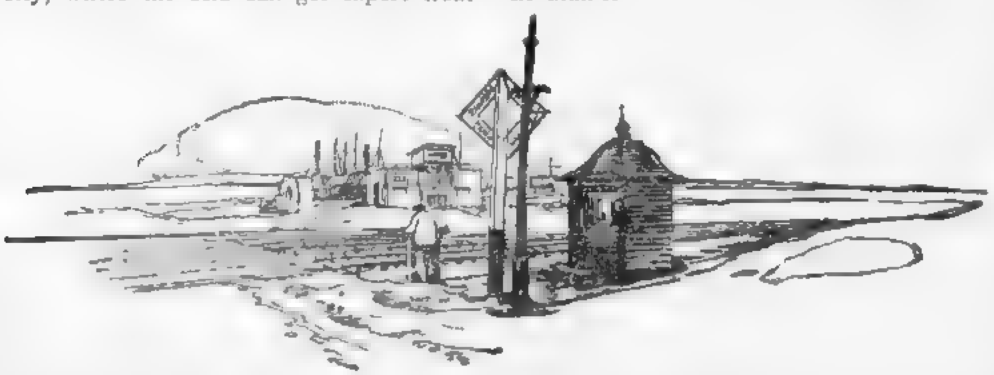
"And listen!" says Ed. "I hear where Jimmie Childe, the English featherweight champ, is over here, under cover, y' know, till they get ready to spring him; and this bird Moore's his manager.

"They say this here Childe is a wonder. A skinny, sickly-lookin' kind of bird, but—oh, how that boy can fight! You haven't never seen him, have you Mac?"

"I'll say I have!" I says.

"When was that?" asks Ed.

"Why," I says, "one time he done me a kind of—now—favor; and then, again, he didn't!"



THE MASTER FRAUD.

BY CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS,

Author of "Hurry Up Bill—Engineer," "Blow for Blow," "Hank Couples 'Em up," "Cheerful Tillie and the Lady Op," "Hank Cooks a Ham," etc.

A FOUR-PART STORY—PART FOUR.

CHAPTER XX.

IN POSSESSION.

PETERSON knew that the intruder would fire. He knew that he was in the presence of two men of the same kind as had killed Dryden and Quinn.

One move and his life would be forfeit. He stood stock still, his hand still resting on the dresser top.

"What do you want?" he asked.

He found his voice was perfectly steady. He had been unnerved through worry over the girl, but he was not unnerved now. He felt no fear.

Only his brain kept whirling to grasp an idea—some plan that would give him the advantage. But he could think of nothing.

"We want you to go with us," the voice said. "Our orders are not to hurt you. We won't hurt you if you go quietly. If you don't—"

"Who are you?" Peterson asked to gain time.

"No useless questions," the voice said. "Will you come?"

Peterson took his hand from the dresser-top and straightened up.

"I suppose I'll have to," he said. "You'll allow me to dress, I suppose."

"Are your clothes in this room?"

"Certainly."

The man slightly turned his head.

"Close the door," he instructed his companion.

The other man closed the door soundlessly, inch by inch.

"You can dress in the dark, can't you?" the voice asked Peterson.

"Yes; but my clothes are in that closet back of you."

A rage that surprised even himself had swept through Peterson as he realized that he was to be made the victim of these thugs. For it was as thugs, and thugs only, that he now viewed them. Suddenly he came to believe that Cort's notion of a master fraud was a figment of the detective's too acute imagination.

These were merely men who killed and spirited away. Bunglers they were, he decided.

As he spoke the man holding the revolver turned his head slightly. Peterson sprang. All the strength of muscles kept trained since his college days was in that spring.

He landed against the man's chest and the fellow fell back. Peterson's hand found his wrist. He twisted it and the revolver fell to the rug. The man grappled with him and they swayed back and forth.

"Get the gun," the man breathed to his companion. "Don't shoot him unless he yells."

A cry for aid from his household had been on Peterson's lips, but he did not utter it. He knew he would be shot if he did.

"Get back of him," the man with whom he fought said. "We can land him, then mind you, if you yell, we'll murder you. If you'll be good you won't be hurt."

As the other man edged behind him Peterson wrenched himself free and whirled. His fist caught the other man on the point of the jaw.

It was a pivot blow, the most powerful he could have delivered. The man went down like an ox struck with a sledge-hammer.

But in that blow Peterson had given his other assailant his chance. He was a big, thick-chested man.

As Peterson whirled from him, he set himself solidly on his feet, and then, as Peterson once more turned to him, he struck. It was a crashing blow straight from the shoulder.

Peterson had a swift sense of collapse. He had a ridiculous sensation of bowing to his opponent, of straightening up, and then of his legs giving way beneath him. He slipped down to the rug, his body falling across that of the other man.

For all the resistance that was left in him he might have been as dead as Quinn was when the long knife found Quinn's heart.

Laura Arnold entered the old Quayle mansion the evening following the night of Peterson's disappearance. She had been accepted by the courts that day as the heiress to the Quayle millions. Everything had been in due form.

Dillingham had engaged counsel to appear in her behalf. Marsden, attorney for Albert Quayle, had lent the dignity of his amiable presence to the occasion. There were a few witnesses—persons who had known Miss Braddon in years past and had known her father and her mother. There were the documents and the photographs.

The newspapers had given the matter but scant attention. They were very busy with the mystery of the murders of Dryden and Quinn.

The Quayle matter was almost a closed incident. At the best it was but romance, not comparable with the grim tragedy involved in the other stories.

Dillingham and Marsden escorted the heiress to her new home. Marsden stayed for a few minutes, for already he could hear the wings of sleep drumming about him.

He was growing very old and he was glad he had the Quayle matter off his hands. Quite quaintly he wished Miss Braddon all happiness and departed.

Dillingham and Laura Arnold were alone. The girl gazed about the big, old-fashioned library where they sat. She had removed her hat and the lights showed that there were shadows on her face

Her eyes were expectant. Fear was in her heart. She was a brainless woman caught in a whirl of forces which she could not understand. She could only realize that the man she had loved was dead—that Quinn, too, who had been kind to her through it all, was dead. Maxson she had not seen. For two days she had been left to the tender mercies of the oily Dillingham.

At last Dillingham spoke and she became swiftly conscious that he had been observing her with his inquiring eyes. She was aware, when he spoke, that she had subconsciously felt that he was looking at her, but she was so dulled that it had taken his voice to make her realize.

"Well," he said, "how do you think you will like it?"

"Like what?" she asked.

"All this," he said, with a wave of his hand

"It isn't going to be mine."

"Not yours? What do you mean?"

She sprang up swiftly, her heart pounding in her temples. It was an attack which was close to hysteria.

"They killed my husband," she said. "They killed Quinn. They'll kill me."

"Don't be a fool," said Dillingham, roughly. "Sit down."

She sank into her chair, pressing her hands against her breast. Her breath came in gasps.

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?" Dillingham asked, sharply.

"Whoever is behind this whole thing."

"You know who is behind it, don't you?" he insinuated. "You know who hired you."

"Oh," she said, "Quinn and Maxson! I don't mean them. It's some one else."

"Suppose," said Dillingham, "it were myself?"

The face of the woman hardened. She looked at the old lawyer with fury in her eyes. She was transformed by an emotion as old as life itself.

"If I thought it was you that killed my husband or had him killed, you'd never get out of this house alive."

Dillingham, physical coward as his kind always are, shrank back from that look

"Well, it isn't me," he said. "You'll soon find that out."

His weak denial seemed half to convince her. She moved around the corner of the table which separated them. Though weak, she was a passionate woman, and she was capable of fury if there was sufficient provocation.

"How will I find out?" she demanded.

"Maxson will tell you," he said. "I am through after to-night. They are going to pay me off."

"'They.' Who?"

"Why, Maxson. He's the only one I've had any dealings with and that's the truth, Mrs. Dryden. Don't look at me like that."

She sensed that he was telling the truth and her old fear came sweeping down upon her again. She went quickly back to her seat.

Dillingham arose

"I'll be going," he said. "I—I cannot stand hysterics. I, too, am getting old, like Marsden. I had to take this when they offered it to me.

"They chose me, I suppose, because I was poor and respectable. That's the way. If I had had a chance—well, good-by, Mrs. Dryden."

Laura looked up at him.

"Why did you just tell me that it might have been you? There was something back of that."

"Just a moment of vanity." He held out his hand. "Well, good-by, and good luck to you."

She barely touched his finger-tips. He bowed and was gone.

Laura Arnold heard the outer door slammed behind him. She did not stir in the big chair in which she sat. She stared straight ahead of her.

She was benumbed by her fright now. It had been growing in her for days—ever since Dryden had been slain. She had contemplated flight once or twice, but she had not found the courage for that.

She was afraid of that force that had destroyed her husband, for as such she had come to describe it to herself. She knew—rather, she felt—that Maxson had not the nerve or the brains to execute the plan which had carried her husband and Quinn out of the world with such terrible swiftness

That there was some one else, she was sure, but who the some one might be she could not even guess. She was altogether concerned as to what was to happen to herself.

Her grief was not so great but that she could think of that. She had contemplated life only superficially, and had never contemplated death at all. What if they should slay her? That, it seemed to her now in the silent loneliness of the great house, would be the next step.

What could she do against a force like that—a force that made the wise journalists look like school children. Even they had not gone beyond the mere fact that both Dryden and Quinn had been murdered.

They had not connected the murders with the Quayle case. They had only gone so far as to connect the two murders because one man had been a member of the firm and the other an employee.

They had searched high and low for Maxson to question him, but they had not found him. They conjectured a good deal about his disappearance. They wondered if he, too, had been murdered.

If he had not been murdered, what had befallen him? One or two papers hinted there might be a connection other than foul play in Maxson's case between Maxson's going and the murders. But that was as near as they dared come to a statement that perhaps Maxson had murdered both men.

All this floated through the girl's mind in a dull, unthinking way as she sat there. Then, so prone are those on the verge of hysteria to changes in impression, she became acutely conscious of the stillness of the big house. She seized the arms of her chair and leaned forward.

Her ears were strained to catch the slightest sound. But the absence of sound was appalling to her senses. The summer night outside was dead to motion and to all sound

And in the house not even a clock ticked.

Trembling, Laura rose to her feet. She was afraid of disturbing this awful stillness.

She put out her foot and began slowly to move across the room. She had almost reached the door when she heard a sound outside.

She was no more frightened than she had been before. She was not capable of greater fright. She waited. There was a hand on the knob and the door was thrown open. Laura stared at the man who stood on the threshold. It was Maxson. The girl put her hand to her lips, crushing it against them, to still the cry that rose to them.

Maxson entered the room quickly and closed the door. He turned to the girl.

"Is there any one here?" he asked.

"Nobody but the old housekeeper, and I haven't seen her since she let us in when I came. How did you get in?"

"I have a key."

"You have a key?" the girl cried.

"Yes," Maxson said. "There is one besides the one I have."

"Oh, God!" she moaned; "then they can get in at any time."

Maxson came close to her and caught her wrist. She could feel that his hands were hot and trembling. The odor of alcohol was on his breath.

"You're scared, aren't you?" he demanded. "You've kind of lost your nerve."

"Yes, I'm scared," she answered, with a kind of whimper. "Why shouldn't I be? Here I am all alone, with my husband dead, and Heaven only knows what's going to happen to me.

"I wish I was well out of it. Why didn't you tell me what they were capable of when I went into this thing, Maxson?

"You said it was easy sailing into a lot of money and you knew we needed money. You played on that."

"Well, why isn't it easy sailing?" Maxson asked. "Nothing has happened to you—not a thing. All you've got to do is to play your part a little bit longer and you'll be on easy street. What more do you want?"

"But I won't have my husband."

"Oh," Maxson sneered, "you can easily get another husband. Little girls like you don't grieve for long."

"Don't you talk to me like that!" the girl flared. "How do you know your own life ain't in danger?"

"Well, I seem to be game to take a chance, don't I?" Maxson asked. "What's got into you? You're a bunch of nerves. Good Heavens! there are millions of better men in the world than Dryden ever dared to be—millions that would fall at the feet of the beautiful Inez Braddon.

"You can marry where you choose. You can go where you choose. You can do whatever in this wide world you want to do. I'll marry you myself if you'll say the word."

"Well, I won't say the word," she snapped. "I've got too much respect for myself, even if I haven't got a lot -say, you tell me who murdered my husband and I'll give you half of what I've got coming to me."

"Silly," said Maxson.

"Silly!" she raved. "Yes, I suppose so. Silly because I am true to the man I cared for. You and your dirty gang can't understand that.

"All you can see is money. All you care for in the world is money. I'll never be so happy with all that is coming to me as Henry and I were in our own one room together.

"He was good to me. Do you understand? And square. And he was the first man that had ever been square with me."

"What do you care about that?" Maxson jeered. "If the next one isn't square, you can divorce him. Money will do anything."

She raised her little clenched hand and struck him on the cheek. He fell back a step, not from the force of the blow, but in pure amazement.

He stood staring at her. Then he laughed. He took the step back to her and reached out his hands.

"Why, you little vixen," he cried. "I've a notion to give you a good shaking for that."

She eluded him and rushed at him, striking out viciously and blindly. Maxson lost his temper and cursed her.

"If you talk like that to me I'll kill you!" she screamed.

"Keep quiet," he hissed. "If you don't—"

The door through which Maxson had entered was opened. They heard the sound of it. The girl was facing it.

Maxson turned. A tall, smiling man stood where Maxson had lately stood

"Softly, Maxson," he said. "Quite softly."

He passed Maxson and stood beside the girl. His eyes burned down into hers. She could feel the power of a compelling personality sweeping through her, quelling the storm of mixed emotions that had driven her wild.

"My dear young lady," the man said in the kindest voice but one that she had ever listened to, "you mustn't permit yourself to become excited. I am quite aware that you have had some very trying experiences. But those are past now. You have a long life of ease ahead of you. Forget the past and its difficulties and look to the future."

The girl was aware that this was the man she should direct her wrath against, but she knew also that she would never do so. His was the mind that had directed every step in the conspiracy a keen, powerful, compelling mind—a mind which stored great gentleness to be used when that would serve and murderous wrath when that would serve better.

She knew that she might as well match herself against that mind as a pigeon might match itself against an eagle.

"Yes, sir," she said, with a submissiveness that was quite like that of a little girl who had been naughty in school.

CHAPTER XXI

CORT IN ACTION

WITH a mighty final effort Angus Peterson pulled himself out of that oblivion into which his opponents in the night had thrust him. It had seemed to him that he had been struggling for hours to pull himself out of the pit of unconsciousness. Several times he had succeeded only to find himself slipping back till he was again in complete darkness. For a while he had had a dim sensation of motion—a motion which nauseated him.

Then, for one twilight moment, he knew that he was lying on a bed. Part of his clothing, he was aware, had been removed. He had asked himself, as we sometimes do, whether this was not a dream within a dream

He tried to recover his faculties fully to ascertain if he was not safe at home, but he had failed. Now, however, he was entirely conscious at last, and he realized with a moan of despair that he had dreamed no dream.

He was not at home. He had been removed from that security to Heaven only knew where.

His first thought was of Inez. He wondered whether she had been subjected to the brutality which had been his lot. He hoped not, and as his brain cleared he believed not.

He supposed then that he had been roughly dealt with only because he had resisted. They had doubtless lured Inez.

His hand crept out along his side and he knew he was in bed somewhere. His coat and vest, collar and tie, and shoes had been removed, and he lay in his shirt and trousers. He was not covered. Apparently his enemies had cast him down, removed part of his clothing, and left him. He felt of his shirt front. It was stiff as if glue had hardened on it

His hand sought his aching head and came into contact with a bandage. So they had hurt him. He had bled and the blood had streamed down on his shirt front.

And they had left him alone in that condition. He might easily have died. He supposed they would not have cared. Perhaps he was to die anyhow.

He sat up in bed and his head whirled. He thought he must lie down again, but he dug his hands into the bed-clothing and maintained his position. Slowly he slipped a foot over the side of the bed, and then the other. He stood up.

The room seemed to whirl and rock with him, and he feared that he was going forward on his face. But slowly the sense of motion abated, and he found he could stand

He found a match in his trouser-pocket and struck it. The tiny flame, as he turned about with it in his shaking fingers, revealed rather a small room

There were no windows in it. Above his head was a skylight, but something had been thrown over this so that only a dim light filtered into the room.

"An attic room," said Peterson. "Where the devil am I, and what kind of a game is this?"

Just before the match burned out he saw a door at his left. He staggered to it and began to beat upon it and to cry as loudly as he could.

There was the immediate sound of footsteps outside. A key was turned in the lock. With the opening of the door came a flood of sunlight. A man stood on the threshold. He entered the room and closed the door, shutting out the blessed light of the sun.

Peterson did not speak at once. The man fumbled beside the door, and an electric-light switch clicked. A single wall light sprang into life. The man stood motionless, looking at Peterson.

"Where am I?" Peterson asked

The man only shrugged his shoulders.

"What time is it?" Peterson asked.

"Eight o'clock in the morning."

"What place is this?"

Again that indifferent shrug. Peterson's rage boiled up. He launched himself at the man, but the man merely put him by with a sweep of his powerful hand.

Peterson then saw that while he was not tall he was of massive physique. Peterson supposed he was one of the thugs of the gang—one of those who did the red work of the master fraud.

"Do you want food?" the man asked, in an impassive voice.

"Yes," Peterson answered.

The other opened the door, passed through it with surprising softness of tread, closed it, and locked it on the outside. Peterson sank down on the edge of the bed and buried his face in his hands.

He cursed himself for a fool. He had been a plaything in the hands of these men. Against them his mind was vacuous and his force was puny.

And he had set himself against them as the champion of a woman he had learned to love. He had tried to be a hero and he had been a weakling.

The man came soon with food and coffee and a small glass of brandy. Peterson drained the liquor eagerly. The man turned to go.

"See here," said Peterson, the liquor strengthening him. "Who's the boss here?"

"I can't give you any information," the man said. "I expect they'll tell you when they're good and ready. I guess they'll want to talk to you after you eat."

"You tell them I'll be through in five minutes," Peterson said.

He ate ravenously and rapidly. He was hungry, but he wished to waste no time. He did not know what his fate was to be, but he wished to know just as soon as he might. He was tired of fighting in the dark.

At the end of five minutes the key was again turned in the lock. The man entered again.

"But I thought your employer would come," Peterson said angrily. "I want to see him."

"Here's something they sent you," the man said

He laid a folded paper before the lawyer. Peterson took it up and opened it. It was a statement, coming from him if he signed it, that the girl purporting to be Inez Braddon, his client, was an impostor and had no claim on the Quayle fortune.

Just above the line where his signature was to be were these words: "And this is true upon my honor, and so help me God."

"Honor?" he said bitterly. "What do they know about honor?"

The man, to whom he had addressed the question with raised, angry face, made no response.

Peterson meditated. In a few minutes he lifted his pen to sign. He was to give his word of honor but he felt that he could break that forced word.

This pack of wolves had forced him into his position. They had used both treachery and force. It was they, not himself, who furnished the weapons.

He had to fight with whatever he could lay his hand to. He had to win somehow.

A sudden thought struck him.

"Has my client, Miss Braddon, signed a paper like this?" he demanded.

"I'll see."

The man was gone not more than two minutes.

"They direct me to say that such a paper has been presented to your client and that she refuses to sign," he said.

"Then tell them I refuse to sign. Take the paper back to them."

"I am instructed to leave it with you," the man said, and he went away.

Peterson made a nervous tour of the room. Wasn't there something he could do? Was it possible that things like these could transpire in the very heart of American civilization?

Yes, he told himself, it was possible. It was an ugly fact.

There was another turning of the key and another entrance of the soft footed jailer. He laid another paper, smaller than the first, on the table in the center of the room.

He did not wait for Peterson to read it. Peterson opened it. It was a note addressed to himself, reading.

> You must sign the paper or we have no alternative but to abolish you. We give you till midnight. It is now twenty minutes past eight in the morning. We have delivered this ultimatum also to your client

Abolish! Peterson saw with what rare precision the master criminal used that word. He would have used it, in its old-fashioned sense, to no one but a man as highly educated as Peterson- a man who himself dealt in shades of meaning as part of his trade.

But he knew that the master criminal meant to convey to him that they would put an end to him utterly. They would take his life and they would destroy his body. It was fiendish.

A cold sweat broke out on Peterson. They had delivered that ultimatum also to that tender-fleshed girl. Doubtless the word for her had been as artfully chosen as the word to himself.

"I must yield," he said to himself. "I must somehow get word to her to yield."

Fifteen hours and forty minutes! That was all that remained to him of life and living and the possibility of loving if he did not yield.

"By Heavens," he told himself, "I'll yield and then we'll see what will happen when I am free."

He sat in deep thought for half an hour. What warranty had he that, if he signed, these brutes would keep their word? What warranty that they would keep their word with Inez Braddon? He might sign and she might sign, and then both of them might be "abolished."

He seized the pen and wrote rapidly on the back of the note. Then he pounded on the door. It was opened instantly.

"Take this note to your master," he said.

The man withdrew with the paper in his hand. Peterson had put a proposition to them which would free Inez. He had asked to see her alone for five minutes.

Then her captors were to liberate her. She was to send him a note which they would agree upon in their talk. When she was free and safe, he would sign any paper, do anything, that they asked him to do.

The answer came shortly. It was brief:

> You have had your last word from us. Be wise and sign

Hours seemed to pass—hours which Peterson spent in a half stupor. A lethargic reaction had followed his stimulation by brandy and food

His head ached dully. His body was sore. He wanted to sleep but did not dare. He sat motionless on the edge of the bed, his eyes closed.

After a long period of this he was aware that there was more light in the room. He opened his eyes. A flood of sunlight was coming from the sky-light

He looked up. The sky-light was slowly being raised. Some one laid it cautiously back on the flat roof.

Then the face of Paul Cort appeared in the aperture. He placed a finger to his lips and Peterson nodded. Cort let down a rope and slid down it into the room.

"Are you badly hurt?" he asked.

"I think not," Peterson said. "I'm all right. How did you get here?"

"By way of the sky-light, as you saw," Cort smiled. "Melodramatic, isn't it?"

"What 're you going to do?"

Cort regarded him with calculating eyes.

"What has developed?" he asked.

Peterson shoved the paper to him.

"Read that," he said.

Cort ran his eyes through the document.

"Shall you sign?"

"They have delivered such a paper to Miss Braddon also," Peterson said.

"Has she signed?"

"She won't sign. The girl has courage. I think she'd almost give her life now before she'd yield to these people. What can I do, Cort?"

"My advice to both of you would be to sign," Cort said. "The big thing now is to get you out of here. That paper would not hold, signed under duress as it would be. It would be nothing, but your lives are in danger."

"If you can get in here, can't we get out?" Peterson asked eagerly.

"I can get you out," Cort answered. "But I cannot get Miss Braddon out. I can't find her.

"I have been searching as much as I dared since last night. But I can't locate her room."

"Can't you bring the police down on the house—have it raided?"

"Ah, yes, but at the first sound of attack what would happen to Miss Braddon? They would kill her at once. They stop at nothing. Remember Dryden and Quinn. You know what ruthlessness was shown there."

"I know," Peterson groaned.

"If I should even assist you to escape the result would be the same," Cort said. "They would know that you would act precipitately, and they would do away with Miss Braddon."

"I must stay then," Peterson said.

"You must stay. And you must get word to Miss Braddon to sign that paper. There is no way out. Even if they do not free you at once, they will not kill you.

"I must have more time than they have given you to live. In forty-eight hours I may be able to set you free."

"You've got information?" Peterson asked. "Are you on the track of the leader of this foul outfit?"

"I think I am," Cort said. "I must be going. Get word to Miss Braddon to sign. I'll see you again to-night."

In spite of his weight he clambered up the rope with the agility of a sailor and disappeared through the sky-light, closing it after him.

Peterson rapped on the door and it was opened. The lawyer called for note-paper.

He wrote a note to Inez in which he urged her to sign the paper. Her answer came back promptly:

"I will not sign till the time is almost up, at least. Something may happen.

He saw that she was clinging to the faintest of hopes. Her pride was keeping her courage at high ebb. All Peterson could do was to take some courage from her attitude.

He marveled at it. He had known that she was strong, but he did not know that she was as strong as this.

But Inez Braddon was not showing strength beyond what her womanhood was capable of. She, too, had a jailer—a sleek, quiet, little man, who came to her prison as Peterson's came to his.

But when the door was closed, Inez Braddon's jailer had none of the stolidity of Peterson's. He stood close to her always and whispered words of advice and encouragement. When she had told him what was in Peterson's note, he had said:

"Tell him you will wait a while. You have several hours yet."

And Inez Braddon, seeming to trust him completely, had said she would wait.

CHAPTER XXII.

FIVE MINUTES TO TWELVE.

THE house in which Peterson and Inez Braddon were held nestled at the foot of a hill at the eastern end of the village, west of which the Quayle mansion stood. It was a two-story house with a "finished"

attic. In the attic were two rooms. Inez Braddon was in one of them; Peterson in the other.

The house had been vacant for a long time. It was understood in the village that it had lately been rented, by whom no one seemed to know. One or two men had come and gone from the place in the last few days.

They had spoken to no one. The villagers assumed that whatever women were in the household would appear before long. They were not greatly concerned about the matter, for the advent of Quayle's granddaughter had taken all the interest they had to spare.

The house was a quarter of a mile beyond the last village light, so that when night fell the place was in darkness. To the east the hill rose into what light the heavens gave, but in so rising it threw a shadow back of it.

In the rear of the house was a small woods of second growth stuff. To the west was an open space, but to the north were more trees. It was as secluded a spot as the men who had spirited Peterson and Inez away could have chosen.

It was ten o'clock of the night when Inez and Peterson were to sign the papers presented to them or be "abolished." Inside the house the drama was going on, as it had been going on for several hours.

Food had been served to the prisoners, but no further communication had been sent to either of them. And they had had nothing to say to their jailers.

But at this hour the thick-set man came to Peterson's room. The man upon whom Inez seemed to be depending came to hers.

"It is ten o'clock," Peterson's jailer said. "Have you anything to say?"

"Has Miss Braddon said anything?"

"I am instructed to tell you that whatever decision you make you must make independently," the man said. "No further communication between you will be permitted."

"I have nothing to say now," Peterson said

"Sit tight," said the man in Inez's room. "There will be something doing before midnight."

And so the girl was waiting, calm, alert, prepared to yield at the last moment if she must, but hoping that her new-found protector could bring the aid which he promised.

Outside the house the drama was shaping itself in a new way. At this very hour a man came up toward the back of the house through the trees. He was an ugly looking person to be prowling about in the night.

He wore a cheap cap pulled down over his eyes. The collar of his short coat was turned up about his neck. About his throat was a red handkerchief

He leaned against a tree, his right hand in the pocket of his coat. The pocket bulged a little as if the man held something in his hand.

He stood motionless, his eyes on the house, for ten minutes. Then another man, dressed just as he was, came through the trees

The two did not look at each other, though they must have been aware of the presence of each other. The second man kept his hand in his bulging coat pocket.

Ten more minutes passed. A third man came. Then a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth. They seemed all of a kind.

The only difference between them was a little variation in size. Each wore a red handkerchief about his throat.

Across the road were four more men, counterparts of these. The four had arrived one by one in the last half-hour. A big oak tree protected each.

A villager, or a dozen villagers, might have gone down the country road at this hour and seen nothing unusual about the house. The curtains were drawn, so that no light filtered through.

The house was as quiet as the grave. None would have noticed the watching ten; they stood as motionless as the trees which hid them.

Afar down the road the light of an automobile appeared. The eyes of the ten turned in its direction. The light came to a stop.

It was turned about and the men could see the backward glimmer of it as the machine sped over the course it had come.

There was five minutes of waiting during which nothing happened. Then a man came striding down the road. The watchers saw that he was a tall, well built man with a stride of one who is sure of himself and of what he is about to do.

He turned in at the driveway and headed straight for the front door. Though he was big, his tread was noiseless, even when he ascended the porch.

In his course he had passed within a few feet of four men whose hands clutched revolvers in their coat pockets. Even in that dim light any one of them could have put a bullet into him. But they let him go. At the front door the man stood listening for a moment, a key in his hand. No sound from within came to his ears. He inserted the key and entered the house.

He was in a long hall. A door was at his right. He groped softly for the handle of this and cautiously opened it. As he did so, Maxson rose from a table at which he had been sitting with his head in his hands. His watch lay on the table before him.

"Well?" the newcomer asked.

"It's eleven o'clock and they are still firm," Maxson said.

"The devil you say," the man said cheerily. "Well, we have an hour."

He sat down and lit a cigar with a match from a silver case.

"Did you see Laura Miss Braddon—to-day?" Maxson asked.

"I did, indeed. She has quite come to her senses. A little persuasion is a great thing with women, Maxson."

"I guess you've got her nailed down," Maxson said.

"You're not losing your nerve, are you?" the man asked.

"Well, my nerves aren't any too steady," Maxson said. "I can't get Dryden and Quinn out of my mind."

"Forget them," the man said soothingly, almost in the same voice as that with which he had addressed Laura Arnold the night before. "I have given you my word of honor that you are safe. I have eliminated all the undesirables."

"But there are Peterson and the girl," Maxson said with a shudder. "Only fifty minutes more and—"

"I don't think it will be necessary," the man said. "I think they will yield. Peterson isn't so big a fool as that. But it's their own lookout. I can do no more than give them their chance."

"If they sign, shall you release them?"

"Not at once. If they sign, they will do so with a mental reservation. I will release them when I know that that reservation has given way before their desire for liberty. It will not be difficult to fathom their mental processes."

"You'll hold them till you are sure they will keep their words?"

"That's the idea."

"You're a wonder," Maxson said.

"No. I must disagree with you there, much as I should like to agree. It has all been too ridiculously easy. And it has been crude. I had hoped there would be no bloodshed."

"I'll be glad when it's over," Maxson said.

The big man shrugged his shoulders and settled himself to enjoy his cigar.

By now Peterson was pacing his room. He was terribly afraid, not for himself but for Inez Braddon. Cut off from communication with her, he could not urge her to yield. He could only wait in an agony of apprehension. He had made up his own mind to sign the paper, on the chance that she, too, would sign. If she did not, he shuddered to think that after midnight he would be among the living while she would be dead

He knew he could not bear that, for she had become inexpressibly dear to him in these last few hours. In his desperation he had debated several plans, but each had seemed futile.

The one which his mind turned to most constantly was to call his jailer and attack him. But he knew the jailer was armed while he was not. The struggle could have but one ending, and while he lived there was a remote chance that he might yet be able to help Inez.

His watch showed a quarter to twelve. He suddenly remembered that Cort had not come back. That seemed ominous, for he knew Cort would come if he could.

Perhaps that mysterious master criminal

whom Cort had imagined had proved too much even for Cort's fertile brain. He went to the door and hammered on it.

"I will sign that paper now," Peterson said.

The man did not speak. The paper lay on the desk before Peterson. He picked it up and from legal habit read it through again.

Then he put his signature on the line left for it. He shoved the paper toward the man with a feeling of disgust, as if he had done something ignoble.

"Will I be informed whether Miss Braddon signs or not?" he asked anxiously.

"I have not been told about that," the man said, picking up the paper.

"Well, can't you find out for me?" Peterson cried. "Good Heavens, man, aren't you human? Or are you all a pack of unfeeling beasts?"

"I'll ask," the man said, his face impassive.

Peterson paced the floor, his watch in his hand. Slowly the minute hand crept up to where the hour-hand marked midnight. It was ten minutes to twelve.

A minute passed, another, another. Seven minutes to twelve.

Peterson stopped in the center of the room, his watch on the palm of his shaking hand. One more minute was gone.

He waited breathlessly. And again one more minute. It was five minutes to twelve.

Three other watches marked that hour. The big man down-stairs held his in his hand as Peterson was doing, but the hand was as steady as a rock. The man who was guarding Inez Braddon had just dropped his back into his pocket.

Outside, one of the men with a red handkerchief about his throat struck a match and looked at his. He jammed the watch back into his pocket and stepped from behind the tree that had hidden him. It seemed to be a signal for the other watchers. The three in the road emerged and the six in the thicket moved rapidly toward the house. They came together at the front door. Four of those who had come from the thicket held a heavy log among them.

"Two minutes to twelve," said the big man to Maxson. "Go to the girl and tell her her time is about up. Ask her what she intends to do. Try to persuade her that it is to her best interests to sign."

Maxson almost ran from the room. He ran up the first flight of stairs and panted up the second. He found Inez's jailer standing outside her door.

"She hasn't signed?" he said.

"No, sir," the jailer replied.

"Open the door."

"Yes, sir."

The man inserted the key in the lock and swung the door open. Beyond Maxson the room was pitch dark.

"Why hasn't she a light?" Maxson asked nervously. "She hasn't hurt herself, has she?"

"I hope not, sir. I was in here a bit ago and she was all right."

He fumbled along the wall till his hand came into contact with the electric switch. The light showed dimly in an incandescent nearly burned out. As soon as Maxson's eyes became used to the feeble light, he saw that the girl was standing across the room from him, her eyes fixed on his face.

Maxson took a step toward her. The jailer quietly closed the door behind him. His hand went to his hip pocket and when he brought it away a revolver lay in his palm.

"Are you going to sign that paper, young lady?" Maxson asked.

"Why should I?" Inez asked coldly.

"You realize, do you not, what your refusal means?"

The girl did not speak. She stood erect, defiant. Maxson's quick anger rose. He took a step toward her. His back was to the little man.

The latter let his revolver slip down till he clutched the barrel. Then he sprang, covering the distance between himself and Maxson in that one leap. As his feet touched the floor, the butt of the revolver came down on Maxson's head.

Maxson swayed slightly and then started to fall. The little man caught him and eased him to the floor.

"Don't move from where you are," the man said to Inez. "There 'll be a man here in a minute to take care of you."

He ran to the door and disappeared through it. The hall was dark. He sped down that on noiseless feet. Suddenly he stopped.

"Hank," he whispered

"Yeh," came from the darkness.

"Where's the big boss?"

"He's in there talking to Peterson," Hank whispered back.

"Say, I got to see him a minute. Run down an' watch my door, will you? The dame has gone bad."

Hank brushed by in the dark. The other could just discern the outlines of his face. With the butt of his revolver he struck him on the temple. The jailer turned.

"Why, you—" he managed to strangle out.

He stretched forth his hands and tried to grapple with his assailant. But the muscles of those arms were relaxed from the blow There was no more strength in his clutch than in that of a child. The little man struck him again and he went down with a thud.

The little man raised his hand and sent a bullet crashing through the ceiling. From down-stairs came the sound of smashing blows of wood on wood. Then there was a splintering sound.

Three men who had been sitting about a stove in the kitchen sprang to their feet. At the kitchen door they found a crowd of men with red handkerchief's about their necks. Each man had a revolver. They swarmed into the room.

"Anybody that makes a noise gets plugged," said a voice of authority.

When he fired the shot to attract those at the front door the little man sprang for the door of Peterson's room. He threw open the door and stood on the threshold.

Peterson was standing by the table. His head was lifted and his eyes were wide with horror.

The big man stood in an attitude of listening. There was no fear on his face, only a kind of dull perplexity which sat oddly there. Over his shoulder he caught sight of the little man.

"What is it?" he demanded.

His keen eyes searched the little man's face. A light leaped to his eyes. His perplexity was gone. Everything seemed plain to him.

"Ah," he breathed, "that's it?"

His hand shot to his hip pocket but it never touched the weapon he carried there. The little man raised his hand and sent a bullet crashing into his chest The big man's hands dropped to his sides; his head shot forward. His knees seemed about to give way.

But with a superb physical effort he staggered to the bed and sat down on the edge of it. His blood was staining his shirt front.

"Good Heavens! they've got you!" Peterson cried

The big man smiled wanly.

Peterson wheeled on the little man.

"You dirty cur," he cried.

The little man looked up at him with appealing eyes.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Peterson?" he asked. "It's Jack—what 're you lookin' at me like that for? I done the best I could for you.

"I got the girl all safe—I couldn't do it any other way but the rough way. It's the only way I know about."

"But you fool," Peterson cried in his despair, "you've shot the only man that could help us. You've shot Paul Cort."

"I do' know his name," Jack said sullenly. "I on'y know he's the guy that was runnin' the show. He's been the big noise in this whole thing."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT CORT OVERLOOKED.

PETERSON turned on Cort with a look of amazement on his face. Then he had a sudden thought and he wheeled on Jack.

"Where's Miss Braddon?" he demanded.

"She's in the other room," Jack said. "She's all right. I had a gang on the outside. That was them breakin' in that noise you heard. I put Maxson out. A couple of the gang is watchin' him by now."

"I'll go to her," Peterson said.

"Wait!"

Cort's voice was but a ghastly shadow

of its former strength. Peterson turned back to him with something like pity in his eyes.

Cort was not bleeding so freely from his wound, but his face was gray. His lips were purple and a thin glaze dimmed the brightness of his eyes.

"I am dying, Peterson," he said slowly "Before I go, just to satisfy my curiosity, I should like to talk to this man a little."

"What he says is true, then?" Peterson asked.

"Perfectly true," Cort said. "Help me to lie down—there! That's better. Now, Jack, start at the beginning and tell me how you happened to be here at the psychological moment."

"I didn't happen to be here," Jack said. "I worked it all out an' it was hard enough with detectives and police layin' for me everywhere."

"Right enough," Cort said with a feeble smile. "Nothing 'happens' in our game, does it, Jack?"

"Well, I studied over the thing for a long while," Jack said. "I couldn't see nothin' to it but to find the big noise. The police was crooked and the Quigley outfit was crooked an' you had a gang of thugs workin' for you

"I couldn't do nothin' with the police, nor with Quigley. But I been a crook myself, if you must know it, an' I begun with the crooks. That's the bet you overlooked, mister."

"Yes, I overlooked something," Cort said. "What was it?"

"You was awful careful to get the chief of police, an' Quigley, an' Maxson, an' Quinn, an' all them that was up at the top, but you let Maxson hire one thug an' you let that thug hire the rest of them. That's where you fell down."

"Go on," said Cort, with a touch of weary regret in his voice.

"Well, when Dryden was murdered, I was layin' low in a lodgin'-house where a lot of us used to hang out. For a dollar a night you c'n lay low there for a year if necessary, an' Mr. Peterson had given me plenty of money.

"So I was layin' low when I read in the papers about Dryden. I says to myself there's some low-brow work bein' done, because I knew you wouldn't be goin' around killin' folks like that.

"So I waited. Well, times ain't any too good with the crooks just now, an' when a man showed up with a load of gilt an' got ready to lay low for quite a spell, I thought he was in on it. I didn't know him, an' so I nosed around till I found a man that did know him. That man introduced me

"It wasn't long before I knew that the man with the money was the man that had done for Dryden. Him an' me was the on'y ones that was heeled, an' he begun to hit the booze free enough. We got to be quite pals.

"I got it out of him one night when I got him particular tight, an' he tipped me off to who the boss of the rough work was —a man you'd never seen, I guess."

"No, I didn't want to see him," Cort murmured. "I didn't want to know who any of those fellows were, and that's where I was weak. Why, I left the thing wide open at the bottom, didn't I?"

"I guess you did," Jack assented. "Well, I met up with this boss before long, an' I got next to him. He was pullin' easy money, an' he was hittin' things a bit himself. I got to him just before you was to want men in this house here.

"I tipped him to a few things just to let him know I was wise. He had one of two things to do—to gimme a job or to stick a knife between my ribs. Stickin' a knife into me meant plannin' an' some work. So he gimme a job. When you're livin' on easy street, you do the thing that's easiest.

"It's only when a crook is up against it that he'll do the hard thing. I guess you never thought of that, mister, when you was pourin' the gilt out to a lot of rummies through Maxson an' from Maxson to this thug. Why, it's a wonder you got off as easy as you did."

"I don't think I've got off very easy," Cort murmured.

"Hadn't we better get a doctor?" Peterson asked.

"No. He couldn't do anything to save my life, and the pain is not great. Let the man go on."

"So I went to a barber-shop where they'll take care of a man in trouble, an' I had 'em fix me up the best they could. Pretty soon the boss come to me an' told me to come here and report. He told me how to rap on the door in the night, an' what to say.

"I was here a few hours when they brought Miss Braddon in an' I was put on guard with her—an' another man that the gang has got down-stairs. Soon as I got a chance I told her who I was, an' we decided we'd sit tight till the show-down I put Maxson out, an' I put the fellow that's been guardin' Mr. Peterson out. An' I guess that's all."

"I congratulate you," said Cort with a wan smile. "You took advantage of the only opening that I had left. You say you used to be a crook?"

"Before Mr. Peterson picked me up an' put me on my feet I was a crook—a pickpocket," Jack said.

"Ah," Cort breathed, "a pickpocket -a common, ordinary thief. You outwitted me; and I, in my time, have outwitted hundreds who had more intelligence in their little fingers than you have in your head."

Peterson approached the bed and stood looking down at the wounded man. There was no doubt that Cort's life was fast ebbing away. A pallor had come under his skin and his lips were taking on a drawn look.

"Mr. Cort," Peterson said, "is there anything you would like to tell me before—"

"Before I die?" Cort smiled. "Yes, there is a great deal. What would you like to know first?"

"Perhaps you will call it a little thing, but to me, it is very puzzling," Peterson said. "I have been wondering at the coincidence that drew me to you in New York. Why, I played right into your hands in the most accidental way in the world."

"There have been no coincidences in this thing," Cort said in a low voice. "In that connection there were two things for me to do. One was to wait till you came to me.

"The other was to go to you. I preferred to have you come to me. That was why I waited as long as I did."

"But how could you expect me to come to you? I didn't even know you. You were a celebrity in your own little world, but not in mine."

"It was very simple," Cort said with a kind of mild impatience. "You were a legal light in your own city. You had friends in New York. Those friends would be big men. It was with big men that I had to do exclusively.

"Ergo, when you came to New York, seeking aid, as you were bound to come when you could get no aid at home, you would seek a man who knew me. That man would bring you to me. If that had not come to pass, I should have gone to you

"You will find nothing mysterious in any of the events which have marked the progress of my little play. There is no mystery in anything. It is only that we are too small to understand."

"But why in the world did you do it at all? Surely it wasn't for Quayle's money. You have money of your own."

"I have no money," Cort said. "What I had I spent on my allies. Great as I have been in my profession, I have had my weaknesses. Gambling has been my besetting sin.

"I am poor. Quayle's millions seemed easy to acquire. But there was a more potent reason—a reason which is perfectly clear to myself, but which may not seem so clear to you.

"For a quarter of a century I had pitted my intelligence against the intelligence of the master criminals of the world. These were not men who skulk in by-ways and hold you up for your watch, but men who, while playing the most desperate of games, court the light of day.

"My clients were the richest men in the world. My name has never been in a newspaper. Nobody but my clients knew who I was.

"I studied crime and criminals as you study the law. I believed that I could fathom any play any crook in the world might make. Some of the joy went out of the chase for me. In the last three years I have never worked on a case without being fascinated by the other side of it.

"I began to figure just what I would do if I had been the criminal and he had been me. I began to believe that criminals, high and low, were a stupid lot.

"I was aware that I was playing with fire, just as a man who is beginning to use morphin is aware of his peril. But I kept on with the fascinating ideal. Then Albert Quayle came to see me."

"Quayle came to see you?" Peterson gasped. "Cort, you didn't murder Quayle, did you?"

"Quayle died a natural death," Cort said. "I was sorry when he died. I wanted him to live. He asked me to find his granddaughter — told me four million dollars awaited her. It was my plan to make him believe Laura was his granddaughter.

"That would have added zest to the game. But when he died, I determined to go on. The war had stopped my work abroad. There was little to do at home.

"I was at leisure and in a position to be out of funds. So I planned to have Laura Arnold inherit the Quayle millions."

"And it was by your orders that Dryden and Quinn were killed?"

"Worms, those two," Cort murmured. "What did it matter about them? I have put much better men than those two out of the way —either driven them to suicide or sent them to prison for life.

"Dryden was in the way. He was Laura's husband, and I planned to marry Laura myself. Quinn was a fool who drank. He was likely to talk."

"It seems to me you might have found a simpler way to carry out your fraud," Peterson said. "What purpose did that New York booking office serve, for instance?"

"Verisimilitude, my friend. It will deceive more quickly than the truth. Maxson and Quinn were the men who were to work in the open.

"Any moment they might be called upon to explain some action. When a man has a standing, a business, he is usually safe from the police, unless they catch him red-handed

"When Dryden showed you that he had a position you ceased to suspect him. That is the principle of the thing. That is why I did not fake my photographers and my lawyer. But I reckoned without two important things—a loving, courageous woman and a loyal man.

"Here are the two extremes of society. A high-minded woman and a man whom you lifted from the gutter. Yet those two conspired to defeat me.

"And, believe me, Peterson, I am a great man. That is, I have been a great man. I could have been anything almost, I think. I could have been a great lawyer, a great doctor, a great merchant. But I have not been any of these, because I am without morals.

"Human life has never been anything to me. I have seen men killed in the electric-chair and come away unmoved. In London I let a man blow out his brains before my very eyes, and I made no move to stop him, though I could easily have stopped him. He was better dead.

"I have been ruthless, because that was the only way I knew. I was a kind of criminal, although till just now I always worked within the law. I had but to take two steps and I was over the line. I thought all I had to do was to set certain criminal forces in motion and direct them as I willed

"What I did not realize was that when I set those forces in motion I set in motion other forces over which I had no control. What I did not conceive was that every man and woman in the world is guarded by the things he or she has done from the beginning—from his or her own beginning and possibly before that.

"As proof, here is a gutter-snipe risen to undo me. He has no brains, and yet your little act of kindness to him touched something remote in him which made him anew in the image of a man.

"If he could save you, he cared nothing for his own life. Putting a gun in his hand made him an avenging angel. And the woman loves you. Perhaps her loving you had more to do with my failure than anything else.

"But that is mysticism. Perhaps I shall understand better after a bit. Ah, well."

The last two words were but a sigh. The man closed his eyes. The red welled out

on his shirt-front again. His face took on a waxen appearance.

"My God, Cort, don't die like this," Peterson breathed. "Let me get a doctor—or a minister."

"No doctor alive could aid me," Cort said. "I have kept the breath in my body by exercising every ounce of my will. I am going fast. A minister would be late, much too late—for me."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAST OF THEM.

THEY found Inez standing by the shrouded window, watching a man with a red handkerchief about his neck. In the dark hall they had passed a similar man at the side of Peterson's fallen jailer.

The man Inez watched was guarding Maxson, who lay prone on the floor. He was stirring a little and moaning.

"He's coming to," the man said.

Peterson crossed to the girl and took her hands in his. Her hands were cold, and he saw that her face was pale and anxious.

"You're cold," he said. "Let's go below stairs and see if there is a fire anywhere."

As they went down, Peterson kept his eyes on the girl, but she did not look at him. They went to the kitchen, where Peterson found a battered old oil-stove

There was a little oil in the tank, and he lit all the burners. Inez held her hands over the feeble blaze of one of them

"You must be about exhausted," Peterson said. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing now, I think," she said. "Are we safe?"

"Entirely safe," he assured her. "The gang has all been taken care of. The fight is over, Miss Braddon. By to-morrow night you will have been established as the heiress to the Quayle millions."

The girl's eyes suddenly brimmed with tears.

"Oh, the Quayle millions," she said. "I wish I had never heard of them."

"You wouldn't give up till the fight was won," he said whimsically. "You're not going to give up now, are you?"

"But I've cost you so much," she said. "I've even put you in peril of your life."

"But I am alive now," he said.

"Yes, thank God, you are alive," she said in a low voice.

Peterson took a step toward her. She was very lovely now. The warmth had brought her color back. Her hair was in a little disarray, but to Peterson its confusion seemed only to add to her charm.

But he remembered her position in time. She was wrought to a rather high pitch of emotion, and she was practically alone with him—more under his protection than she had ever been.

He could afford to wait. What Cort had said about her loving him was ringing in his ears, but there was a good chance that Cort, keen as he was, was mistaken. The least he could do was to give her time.

"Miss Braddon," he said, "will you tell me just how you happened to be here?"

"They brought me a note purporting to come from you," she said.

"I wrote you no note," he said.

"I know. I realized that it was a forgery as soon as we had left the city behind. They said that something had happened to you and that you wanted to see me. They said you were in danger."

"And you thought you were on your way to help me?"

"Yes, that was what I thought. They were frank about it. They said that you had decided to give up the fight. They explained that if I went events would transpire that would 'put me out of the running,' as they expressed it.

"I see now why they talked like that. If I went, it would show that I I would even give up the money to save you. They brought me to this house, and then they tried to make me sign that paper. They said you were to die at midnight if I did not sign.

"I would have signed, of course, if it had not been for Jack. He was a tower of strength to me. He was so sure that he could save us both that I depended upon him. And he saved us."

"Yes, he saved us," Peterson said soberly. "Shall I tell you about it?"

She nodded. He told her the story.

"Then that poor girl is alone now," she said. "What are we going to do about her?"

"As soon as it is light we will go to see her," Peterson said. "There are several things I want to see to here. I will call Jack to stay with you."

He went to the door and called Jack. The former crook came down the stairs noiselessly on rubber-soles. Peterson left him to guard Inez. Then he went to the room where Cort lay.

Cort was quite dead. Death had seemed to stamp his face so harshly that Peterson drew the coverlet over the body and left him.

He sought out Maxson, who had pulled himself together and was sitting on the edge of the bed with his head in his hands. He looked up as Peterson entered the room. His face was haggard and his eyes were dull.

"Well, Maxson," Peterson said, "the game seems to be up."

"Oh, the game is up right enough," Maxson agreed. "What 're you going to do with me?"

"That's not for me to decide," Peterson said. "I shall notify the police and the coroner in the morning. They will take care of you."

"The coroner?" Maxson said. "Who's dead?"

"Cort."

Maxson stared at the lawyer for a moment and then he dropped his face in his hands and began to laugh. It was a horrible mockery of mirth, and it made Peterson shiver. He strode over to the man and shook him roughly by the shoulder.

"Don't do that," he said. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm glad he's dead," he said. "I'm glad he hasn't got me any longer. God, I've been afraid of that man, even though he did give me his word that he wouldn't harm me."

"How did you happen to associate yourself with him?" Peterson asked.

"He made me," Maxson answered bitterly.

"Made you? Did he have something on you?"

"No, he had nothing on me, but he insinuated himself into my life in a way I couldn't resist, if you can understand what I mean. I guess he was a hypnotist, or something.

"We seemed to meet quite accidentally. The next day we met again. The next day we met twice. In three days I was hardly ever out of his sight.

"One night he invited me to his rooms. How that man could talk. He painted a picture that warmed me like wine, just to look at it. Before he was done I seemed to be twice the man I had been. I felt I was capable of almost anything.

"And then he turned to and told me the story of my life from the time I left school. He told me things I had even forgotten myself. I was amazed.

"Of course it was all very simple when he explained it. He had wanted to amaze me, and he had done it. He had found out about me to see if I was the man he wanted.

"He could find out things quicker than any man I ever met. He seemed to know beforehand what was going to happen. He explained that by saying that he always anticipated. 'Be ready and you can't lose,' he always told me.

"But he lost, didn't he?"

"Yes, he lost," Peterson said gravely. "But weren't you ruthless when you had Quinn and Dryden killed, especially Quinn?"

"It was Quinn's life or mine," Maxson said sullenly. "Cort didn't give me his word that I was safe till after I had done his bidding about Dryden and Quinn.

"Oh, the nights I've spent. Man, I've lived in the pit ever since I went into this thing."

"Did you ever think Cort was a little mad?" Peterson asked.

"Oh, he was crazy in a way, I guess," Maxson said wearily. "But he had the keenest mind, whether he was crazy or sane, that I ever came into contact with.

"I'm going to lie down here, Peterson. I'm all in. Do what you like with me in the morning."

Peterson returned to the kitchen. Inez was in a sleep of exhaustion with her head

pillowed in her arms on the pine table. He sat down in a chair against the wall and leaned back. Presently he dozed and then he slept.

The summer sun was sending its rays through the dusty kitchen panes when he awoke. Inez still slept, just as he had left her. He crossed to her and touched her on the shoulder.

She stirred out of her sleep slowly, and then lifted startled eyes. She smiled. Her sleep had rested her, and her abundant health was practically at high-tide again. There was a kind of dewy freshness about her, now that her anxiety was quieted.

"Are you ready to go home?" he asked.

"Home?" she wondered

"To your grandfather's house," he said.

"Yes," she said gravely. "But you will be kind to that poor girl, won't you?"

"I will," he said

He had Jack get a machine for them and send a man to notify the village authorities and the coroner.

The aged serving woman answered his ring at the front door of Inez's new home. Peterson pushed the door ajar and asked Inez to enter. The astonished woman closed the door.

"Is your mistress up?" Peterson asks.

"Yes, sir," the woman answered. "She's just had her breakfast. I think she's in the library, sir."

"Take us there," Peterson directed

The woman led them to closed double doors.

"That will do," Peterson said "You may go."

The woman edged away, watching them wonderingly till she disappeared into the dining-room.

Peterson pushed the heavy doors ajar. Laura Arnold was seated in a big chair, reading the morning paper.

At the soft sound of the sliding doors, she looked up quickly. Peterson and Inez stood on the threshold, looking at her.

Laura Arnold was dressed as befitted her new station. Her regret and her anxiety seemed to have slipped from her.

She looked, for an instant, the picture of serenity and repose. Then she rose quickly and the paper fluttered down.

"What are you doing here—with that woman?" she demanded. "What do you want in my house?"

Peterson advanced into the room with Inez at his side. He closed the big doors back of them.

"My dear young lady," he said quietly, "I hope you have sufficient control of your nerves by now not to make a scene. Miss Braddon has come to take possession of her grandfather's home."

"Miss Braddon?" Laura Arnold sneered. "There is only one Miss Braddon. That's me. What 're you trying to do now. I thought you had got tired of your bluff."

"Your language does no credit to the late Albert Quayle," Peterson said with a smile. Then his voice grew sharp as he added:

"Cort is dead."

"Cort? Who is Cort?"

"The gentleman who was at the head of the enterprise which brought you here."

"You mean him?" Laura gasped. "The big man that was here. The—oh, you're lying. He's isn't dead. He couldn't die."

"He wasn't supernatural," Peterson said. "He is dead, I tell you, and Maxson by now is under arrest."

The girl slowly sank back into her seat, trembling.

"And that's the last of them," she said.

"Yes, that's the last of them."

She held her eyes on his face for a moment and then they roved the room as if she sought some avenue of escape. Her mind was dulled, as if by a physical blow.

The first thought that came to her was for her own safety. She was by nature soft and timid, except when she had some one stronger than herself to lean upon.

"What 're you going to do to me?" she asked.

"We will give you a chance if you care to take it," Peterson said. "You had better leave here at once. You can get a train in thirty minutes.

"Seek some safe seclusion and let me know where you are. We bear you no ill-will. We shall be glad to see that you are taken care of. There is a car at the door.

"What do you say?"

"I'll be ready in five minutes," she said, and she fled from the room with a swish of silken garments.

Peterson rang the bell. The aged woman came

"Will you give us some breakfast?" he asked.

The woman stood looking at Inez.

"This is Miss Braddon," Peterson said. "The genuine Miss Braddon."

The aged woman advanced to Inez and stood looking up at her.

"I knowed that other was never a Quayle," she said. "But you are. You're like your mother was at your age. Are you goin' to stay on here, miss?"

"For a while at least."

"It 'll be like the old days," the woman said, and she hastened away to the kitchen.

Laura Arnold, dressed in her street clothing, came to the door.

"I need money now," she said. "They didn't give me any."

Peterson gave her money.

"I'm sorry for you," he said gently. "Get to some safe place and don't worry."

The girl went out of the door in a kind of a daze and climbed into the car. She did not look back as the car whirled away.

In half an hour Peterson and Inez sat at breakfast. They talked little till the meal was done.

It was very still and cool in the big dining-room. Outside there were the soft sounds of summer. The scent of old-fashioned flowers came to them.

"Pleasant, isn't it?" Peterson asked.

She did not speak. For an instant her eyes were down-dropped. Then she raised them and looked at him. Her gaze was straightened, frank, unwavering. Peterson sat motionless and gazed into the deeps of those eyes.

What he saw there filled him with a happiness which, he divined, only the years could measure.

(The End.)

SWAPPIN' NEWS.

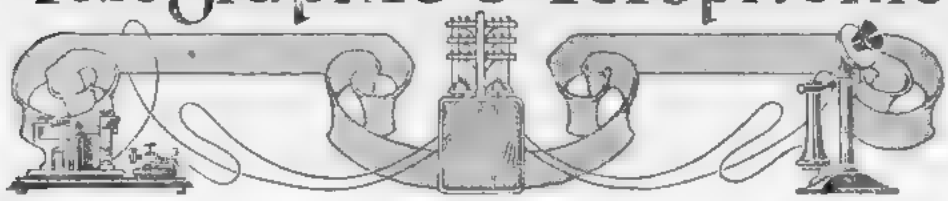
BY JAMES RAVENSCROFT.

RATTLESNAKE BILL meets with Red Hollow Hank,
And says to him: "What 'll be yours, old tank?
Jimson-weed juice or some cucklebur sap?
Anything new goin' on at the Gap?"

They leaned on the bar and ordered stuff straight;
And Hank says to Bill: "That licker's shore great.
No, the Gap's went to the buzzards fer fair.
Anything doin' round here anywhere?"

Says Bill: "Nawthin'—oh, yes, Porkypine Pete
While here t'other day drapt dead on the street."
"Heart?" asks Hank, pouring a four-fingered one.
"No," says Bill briefly, between gurgles, "gun."

Telegraphic & Telephonic



IF there is anything you want to know about the telegraph, telephone, or radio telegraphy—if you have an operating problem that puzzles you—if you want to discuss a question of theory—write the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. We have engaged a technical expert who is one of the leading authorities of the country on these subjects. Ask him. He knows!

ELECTRIC CURRENT THROUGH THE BODY.

S. L. D., Memphis, Tennessee.—The answer to the inquiry from "A. K. R.," Charleston, Massachusetts, which appeared in the December 7 issue of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE, was correct. The voltage used for the purposes of electrocution is between 1,700 and 2,000 volts direct current.

What you say is true—that cases have been known where a person coming in contact with a wire charged with 80,000 volts was not killed, while, on the other hand, a voltage of 110 has been known to kill.

The condition of the human body with reference to moisture, perspiration, and thickness of surface skin has a material bearing upon the effects resulting from contact with charged electric wires. An interior wireman of our acquaintance can hold in his hands the terminals of a 110-volt circuit without feeling any current. This is because his hands are hard and calloused from rough work. There are many wiremen and linemen who, in order to determine whether or not current is flowing in a circuit, have to apply the tongue to the terminals in order to feel, or "taste," the current.

Voltages above 100,000, if of high frequency and of low wattage, are seldom fatal unless the path of the current is through the head directly.

RAILWAY TELEPHONE SELECTORS.

H. S. G., Peterboro, Ontario.—Selectors stamped "Northern Electric Company" are made by the Western Electric Company, and are the type of selector generally referred to as Western Electric.

The reason you do not hear a click when you move the receiver hook is that the talking battery is supplied from the terminal office, there being no battery switch in connection with the receiver hook.

The selector circuits may seem somewhat complicated, but if you study them carefully you will in due time be able to reason out each operation. The pedal for calling the despatcher shows in the diagram in the form of a contact button.

The strap-key you refer to is used in circuits that normally are open, that is, where no circuit closer is required. This type of key is used for testing purposes, and in large telegraph-offices signal bells are operated by this type of key, the key being located at the branch office. The purpose of the signal bell at the main office is that the branch office may be connected through to an office in another city, and when anything goes wrong with the circuit, it is well for the branch office operator to have a quick means of calling the repeater chief at the main office to the wire so that the trouble may be remedied.

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR CENSORS.

R. J. T., New York City.—A list of the United States government censors and telegraph operators stationed at Key West, Florida, in May, 1898, follows: W. R. Letham, M. L. Hellings, J. W. Atkins, C. R. Baker, D. L. Farron, E. H. Stricklin, Sergeant Sheppard, M. R. Portilla, O. P. Love, H. B. Peters, C. A. Hamilton, Joseph Boyle, and T. R. Warren.

A BETTER JOB.

W. G. C. D., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.—Your letter is very interesting, and had you given us your address, we should have been glad to forward you a reply by mail, as the published answer to your inquiry may appear too late to be of immediate service to you.

A great many telegraphers are situated as you are. All ambitious men occasionally think that there must be some way they can make greater progress and earn larger salaries. The fact of the matter is we all hear a good deal about other

professions that is not true. The law, medicine, traffic, accountancy, *et cetera*, all are good lines, but it requires a four-years' course devoted entirely to study to become proficient in any of these professions, and at the end of the four years the graduate generally realizes that the line he has selected is pretty well crowded, and that there is to be another period of four or five years during which the struggle will be trying.

A salary of $150 to $175 per month is not unusual for a telegraph wire chief, chief operator, or inspector, and in the telegraph service there are many positions which pay considerably more than this.

How would it do for you to study the technical side of telegraphy, with the object of becoming a wire chief in the commercial telegraph service? The hours are short, the prospects are immediate, and the work permanent.

The future of telegraphy in this country seems very bright, and if we can aid you in starting your studies in the right place, let us hear from you again.

WASHINGTON TELEGRAPH OFFICES.

W. W. D., Denver, Colorado.—The telegraph-offices maintained at the War Department and at the State Department in Washington during the last two years have had very large telegraph staffs, being manned by some of the most expert telegraphers in the country. The bulk of the matter transmitted is in government cipher or code, and these offices as a general thing work direct with the main offices in New York of the Western Union and Postal Telegraph Companies, sending all business there for distribution and relay.

O. C. GREENE OF THE N. P.

G. L. C., Sioux City, Iowa.—O. C. Greene was superintendent of telegraph of the Northern Pacific Railroad from construction days until about 1911, when he was succeeded by M. H. Clapp. In July this year (1918) Mr. Clapp became head of the telegraph department of the United States Railroad Administration, and he, in turn, was succeeded on the Northern Pacific by Mr. E. E. Dildine, who now is superintendent of telegraph of that road, with headquarters at St. Paul, Minnesota.

OPERATORS WITH THE COLORS.

WALTER RUNNELLS, lieutenant in the signal corps and an ex-Western Union operator from Boston, has arrived overseas, where he is in service as an airplane observer.

Captain Roy D. Jones, of the Boston and Maine Railway, Boston, Massachusetts, is now overseas as an engineer in the transport section.

Lieutenant L. F. Gilson, late agent and operator for the Boston and Maine at Farmingham, New Hampshire, who has been in France during the past year, has arrived in the United States, where he has been ordered to serve as an instructor in a Southern military camp.

SPARK PLUG TROUBLE.

R. L. T., Wirt, Oklahoma.—From the statement of your trouble contained in your letter it would seem that the spark-plug used is not of the right design or of sufficient capacity to operate the engine.

You might see if you can procure an A. C. (Titan) spark-plug, or a Champion porcelain plug. There are various models of these two types of plug. The porcelain plug is thoroughly reliable. It may be heated white hot, and then plunged in ice-water without cracking.

SENDING TOURNAMENT AFTER THE WAR.

OPERATORS employed on railroads and in large commercial telegraph offices throughout the New England States are taking a great deal of interest in the telegraph tournament talked of to take place soon after the close of the war.

Many first-class telegraphers are somewhat backward in advancing their claims to a place on the bench, but in the present instance considerably rooting is being done for good senders by their telegraph friends and admirers.

We have received many letters suggesting names of operators who should be invited to participate in the next big contest.

One event of the proposed tournament which seems to be widely supported is that of "The Best All-Round Operator." In this class the name of John J. Mullens, night wire chief in the Boston office of the Western Union Telegraph Company has been submitted. We had an idea that first-class "all-round" operators are a rarity these days, but it may be that there are enough of them to fill up a class at the contest. The winner in this class surely would be entitled to the Carnegie diamond medal, provided his speed in sending was up to the mark established in the message class and press class.

WIGWAG WITH BATTERY.

R. C. L., Sherbrooke, Quebec.—You say in your letter that your sending machine requires a "20-ohm battery." We presume you mean that the coils of the transmitter are wound to a resistance of 20 ohms, and the instrument so marked. If this is the case, it would require about one-fifth of an ampere to operate the instrument.

There is no way you can use the current from the main-line telegraph circuit to operate the instrument, as the main line is not always closed, and the current strength in the main line is not more than one-twentieth of an ampere. You might be able to operate it from the local sounder battery, but, as you have observed, by doing this you rob the sounder of current, making it inoperative. You could by means of an inexpensive

switch connect the transmitter so that the local battery would operate the transmitter while the sounder is cut out, and then when you receive you would have to reverse the switch so the battery would operate the sounder and not the transmitter. This would not be satisfactory or convenient.

If your electric-light current is direct-current 110 volts, you could connect the transmitter in series with an ordinary incandescent lamp, and in that way be independent of the telegraph local or main-line battery. Unless you can do this, you will have to use dry cells.

STUDYING FOR PROMOTION.

R. B. C., Harvey, Iowa.—In order to qualify for a position as wire chief or repeater chief in a relay office you should study up on duplexes, quads, and repeaters. A good book is "American Telegraph Practise," which may be purchased from J. B. Taltavall, 253 Broadway, New York. This book costs $4, but it is a large work, and is the equivalent of three or four $2 books.

If you desire to become a train despatcher, you would, perhaps, make greater progress by getting into a terminal office as repeater man or assistant wire chief, and after you become proficient in handling wires, you could then decide whether you would be better off to remain at that work or to apply for a train-despatching position.

OPERATORS WITH THE COLORS.

IN addition to previous lists published in this department of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE of operators who are serving in the military or naval forces of the United States, the following railroad telegraphers are reported: N. Y., N. H. and H. R. R., F. H. Webber, George Higgins, W. E. Moore, W. M. Hamill, H. J. Beauchesne, J. L. Cronin, and James Coughlin; Pennsylvania Railroad, Joseph Dolan, Richard Rigney, Frank P. Dinges, W. L. Scully, John Caulfield, W. F. Scully, and J. W. Risch; C., M. and St. P. Ry., Ralph Coon and George Herbstruth; Missouri Pacific Ry., A. D. Meclure and C. E. Shockley; Chesapeake and Ohio Ry., J. F. Knipp, Walter Renner, O. E. Miller, and O. W. Alexander; Northern Pacific Railroad, C. T. Williams, R. C. Tuthill, R. H. Sims, Frank Gabriel, Edward Orman, Frank Kline, Harry Raeshke, F. B. Coil, and H. Crandell; Great Northern Railroad, A. Butala, George Berg, J. A. Hulett, C. H. Childs, C. Fridland, Carl Lundhagen, Roy Searle, and P. L. Webb; C., R. I. and P. Ry., James Powers, T. A. Collins, Z. W. Davis, Harry Ford, J. W. Reeves, and P. J. Coyne.

THE DIME LINE.

A GIRL student operator in Michigan writes us a letter in which she says she has a brother working as operator on the "Ten-Cent Railroad."

For a moment we were in doubt as to whether her brother was with the St. Paul-Minneapolis electric line or the New York subway. Later the idea occurred that the young lady had reference to the Tennessee Central.

TELEGRAPH INSULATORS.

H. E. R., East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.—So far as the effect of fog upon the insulation of telegraph lines is concerned, it is common practise to disregard the leak between wire and wire between pole-supports; that is, between pole and pole. The trouble is the result of a deposit of moisture upon the insulators themselves, permitting an escape of current from the wire, over the insulator surface, and to earth by way of cross-arms and pole. The fact that there are about forty of these leakage paths to earth in each mile of line constitutes an aggregate leakage of considerable proportions. In Great Britain there is commonly used an insulator so designed that the line-wire is itself insulated where it passes through the insulator on the pole.

To entirely prevent leakage due to fog or moisture it would be necessary to do as you suggest—completely insulate the wire from its supports. To accomplish this by present means practically amounts to the use of lead-covered aerial cables.

There are so many insulators used that the wire companies would not look favorably upon any scheme that would increase the cost of insulators, especially if the employment of the new insulator would involve additional maintenance expense, or increase stringing and repair expenses.

Wood fiber is not satisfactory. It warps in the summer heat, and is not satisfactory from a mechanical standpoint for outside use.

Glass or porcelain insulators are supposed to be screwed as far on the wood pins as the thread will allow.

We would not advise spending much money on the scheme, but if you can make up a sample of your proposed insulator, then make a sketch of it, and have it signed and witnessed and dated, you could thereafter safely submit the sample to any telegraph construction foreman for an opinion as to its practicability.

SOUNDER SWITCH.

D. D. R., Sidney, Ohio.—The three main-line relays may be so connected through a four-point switch that by shifting the lever of the switch one local sounder may be used to operate from any one of the relays.

The plan is to connect the pivoted end of the switch lever to one side of the local battery, the other side of the battery being connected to one side of the sounder. The other binding post of the sounder should be connected to the post on all three relays that is wired to the tongue of each relay. Then if the remaining three contact buttons of the switch are each connected to the post on each relay that is connected to the front-stop of the relay, the hook-up is ready for business.

GETTING THERE ANY OLD WAY.

BY CHARLES S. GIVEN.

The "Old-Timer" Spins an Unveracious Yarn That Would Put the Late Baron Munchausen to Shame.

THE arrival in town of a local freight-train, minus its rear end, which had been left up the line a few miles, without the knowledge of the boys on the smoky-end, caused the yard-men to give the train-crew the laugh

This could not have happened on an all-air train, of course, but in this instance, the equipment was of the old-fashioned sort, and a draw-bar had been pulled out up the line. The brake had been repaired with a chain, which had broken a little later, leaving the rear end of the train behind without warning to the men in the cab

This mishap gave one of the old-timers in the yard a chance to reminisce.

"Reminds me," said he, "of the time Tim Hodge came into town, years ago.

"Tim was running the local freight, and that day she poked her nose into Simpson some six hours late.

"That was nothing very remarkable, as she was always tardy, but her *manner* of coming in with the caboose in the lead of nine box cars which the engine was pushing, and eighteen freight-cars coupled behind her—was a little surprising.

"The always florid face of conductor Tim shone like a big sunflower as he sat perched on the monitor, giving the come-aheard sign, and for once Tim's proverbially even temper got away from him.

"As the chaffing from the boys broke loose—as usual whenever a train came in much late—Tim turned on them angrily.

"'You runts shut your traps or I'll shut them for you!' he threatened. 'Of all the bum pikes and bum crews working on them, this here streak of rust beats 'em all!' he exclaimed.

"'Where have I been all day? Huh! Been hunting for the head-end most of the time, trying to keep along with it.

"'Haven't seen it more than twice since we pulled out of Oakley this morning.

"'That lunk-head pulling me thinks if the head-end is wiggling that's all there is to it.

"'I've been twelve miles behind him, part of the way, and had other fellows get me out of the hole so I could catch up with him again, and I wouldn't have got in at all if I hadn't got ahead of him, so he *had* to bring me along

"'You fellows needn't laugh. It's straight goods, and I'm going to reel it off to you and get it out of my system.

"'We left Oakley with twenty-seven cars, and on account of Jim Gibbs's engine getting into the ditch yesterday and injuring the crew and head-shack, I had to have a hopeless set of near darn fools shoved onto me, in their places.

"'I had that lunk-head of a switcher-engineer that never was outside of a yard since he pried himself loose from the farm; a wiper for a fireboy and a misfit for a hind-man, while I sent the old flagman up ahead to help steer 'em over the pike.

"'First time that goat-herder ever was turned loose outside the fence, as I just told you, and he didn't know beans.

"'First stop's Spauldings, you know, and he run the town, 'cause the head-man was riding a buggy seat back on a flat, and before he could get up ahead and pull 'em down Lunky had shut off for Albans. The time-card says that's two miles and three-tenths west of Spauldings.

"'I struck out for the kettle, and read the riot act; set that darn fool studying the

time-card and asked him if he could show that No. 68 was the limited. If he could I'd have no objections to his hitting the high spots and dodging the towns, but if he was convinced he was just running a "pick-up and drop-em" that has to stop every time a dog barks or wiggles his tail —why we'd get down to brass tacks.

"'He told me he didn't have time to look at the card before we left town, but head-shack had told him to hit the high-spots and stop for nothing but a red flag!

"'At last I got it through his nut that about all we did was stop. Sometimes we'd run as far as from one town to another, but not often, and now we had to go back to Spauldings and do our work. "Come on and get orders!" I yelled, and he followed like a whipped pup.

"'The guy at headquarters informed us that there was nothing but a crate of poultry at Spauldings to pick up, but he wasn't going to pull No. 88 down for it, so it was up to us to mosey back and get it.

"'We got our running-orders, cut off the engine and turned back to Spauldings.

"'We arrived at Albans in twenty minutes, more or less, but huh!—that crate of poultry consisted of one little runt of a bantam rooster! Get that?

"'Lunky was scared to wiggle 'em on the back-up stunt; afraid the tank would spill itself over the surrounding country. Some class to that plug-puller, eh?

"'We had to lay at Albans for No. 3, then amble along our weary way, seven miles from home, and fifty minutes late.

"'We dropped seven at Kite Junction, picked up three, and hauled ahead, and set a nice new caboose billed for the O. and B., ahead of mine; got out of town, and by pounding 'em could have run the two sidings between Kite and Bangs, and made it on No. 6.

"'But Lunky pulled out easy and came near stalling on Pipers Hill, and lost so much time getting 'em over the hump, that we should have gone into Hales Siding and let No. 6 by, but soon as he got 'em headed down-hill, he yanks her wide open for this burg or some other one further along.

"'Head-shack starts over the tops for the front, *pronto*, to pull him down, but he didn't make it in time to let his nibs know we was stealing three minutes on No. 6, and we rattled over the points with the drivers purring.

"'By the time he got Lunk shut off and pulled down, we had run by the west switch, at Libbys, and came to a stop on that steep grade. Couldn't back in to save our gizzards and No. 6 was due in four minutes.

"'I grabbed the flag and scooted back to keep No. 6 from piling into us.

"'When I'd got 'em stopped and swung up to explain, old "Beef" Masters exploded, and for about two minutes I didn't get a chance to open my mug. But when he found out who was pulling me he calmed down, and pulled down behind us.

"'But he swore he'd be blessed if he'd hook on and help pull us back into the siding, not if he never turned a wheel again.

"'Only way out was to jog along to Bangs, on their time, and let 'em follow us.

"'Then I wired in and asked if I couldn't have a real engineer to finish the run.

"'That wise guy at headquarters told me that there wasn't a real engineer on the whole blooming pike—and anyway, he couldn't send me one.

"'I talked for half an hour, trying to beat some sense into my hogger's skull, then turned him loose for Hazleton.

"'It's most all down-hill, the whole fifteen miles after you get a mile out of Bangs. My brainy plug saw a good chance to fall down-hill, and opened her up, snapping the coupling-link between cabooses, and ran away and left me.

"'I let her roll, on the two mile tangent, then, not knowing how soon they'd look back, if ever. I thought I wouldn't take any chances of bumping into them if they came to a stop. So I anchored at Jones cut, hiked round the curve and put a flag between the rails, so if they should back up they wouldn't run me down. Then I went out to protect the rear.

"'I waited there just forty minutes, and then No. 10 came down behind me, and they informed me that my train was at Hazleton, and to save time they had orders to pick me up and pilot me to town. Can you beat that?

"'When I arrived, I asked the brake-twisters if they had stiff necks, so they couldn't look back and see if they had the whole string with them!

"'They'd forgotten that there ought to have been *two* cabooses until they got most of their work done at Hazleton. Then, as I did not show up ahead, they tumbled that they must have left me somewhere up the pike.

"'They did have sense enough to ask for orders to go hunt me up, but No. 10 was about due at Bangs, then, and they got orders to bring me along, while my outfit got into clear.

"'We jogged along from one town to another after a fashion, and arrived at Wilcox five hours late. Then comes the climax

"'There's another seven miles of down-grade to Conklin, and no siding, just a short spur, and that saved my bacon, or probably I'd still be out on the line somewhere.

"'Lunky started them down the hill pretty brisk, but when he pulled out of the sag in Sawyers Woods my caboose and ten cars snapped off.

"'Both shacks were out front, and soon discovered that they had lost me. So they swung Lunky down and began to twist brakes

"'I knew that if they missed me they couldn't back that train up the hill and pick me up, so after I slowed down I let her roll along, easy.

"'The boys got 'em stopped just beyond the switch at the gravel pit, and as it's practically level there, they decided to set the train off on the spur and go back after me.

"'There's a mighty sharp drop into the pit, you know, and it swings off round a curve, with a lot of young growth between the main-line and the spur.

"'They dropped back into the pit, and when the plug-puller realized that he was going down over that pitch too fast, he reversed her, and broke a coupling on the second car from the kettle.

"'The head-man was on the first car, so those cars dropped in there running wild. As there was no bunter, four of them piled off at the end.

"'The hind-shack was at the switch, and got excited when he heard 'em pile up. He threw the switch back to main-line and ran down the spur to see what had happened.

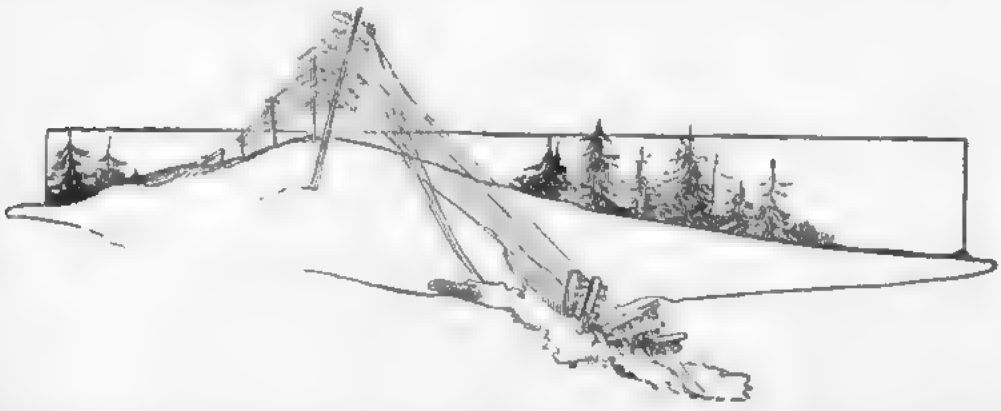
"'I came jogging slowly along, and when I saw a straight run of over a mile, and nothing in sight, I kicked off the brake and rolled along to Conklin, only to find I'd missed the head-end somewhere—and that could be only at the Gravel Pit, where they had gone in out of sight.

"'Well, they started back with the engine to hunt me up, and as they couldn't find me went clear back to Wilcox, only to learn that I had got by them, and was at Conklin.

"'In the course of half an hour they wandered into town with what cars were still left on the iron, coupled in behind me, and here I am.

"'If that darn fool runs back with me to Oakley I'm going to back up all the way so as to make sure of getting into town.'

"And then, Tim started for the super's office to see if he couldn't have a real engineer for the return run."



LUCK TAKES A HAND.

BY ALLAN MURRAY.

St. Just Was a Scoffer at Luck—Until the Fickle Goddess Intervened in His Own Affairs.

ERK," said St. Just, passing over a check and some papers, "you know I am doing this out of friendship; it's contrary to my ideas of a man's duty to all his neighbors."

Perkins, shabby and underfed, looked steadily for a moment before replying at well-groomed and well-nourished St. Just.

"I suppose the best way to thank you, Charles," he said, "is to make good and prove that I have been unlucky, not incompetent."

"Right," St. Just assented; "but, my dear fellow," placing a hand on Perkins's shoulder, "first of all get rid of that 'unlucky' idea. There is absolutely no such thing as luck.

"A man sees and takes advantage of his opportunities; or he doesn't see them, or fails to take advantage of them. That's the whole story—there's no such thing as luck."

Half an hour later St. Just, wearing a new spring overcoat, and with a well-brushed hat and freshly polished shoes, passed through the revolving doors of the building to the sidewalk. At that precise instant a skidding taxi brought up against the curb directly in front of him with a vehemence that sent showers of liquid mud flying in all directions.

Escape would have been impossible to the most alert and active man in the world. The well brushed hat, it is true, received only a few splashes, and the overcoat, also, fared surprisingly well, but the freshly polished shoes were deluged with greasy black mud and water.

Charles St. Just was a well-balanced young man, who rarely allowed his temper to gain the upper hand. But if he swore under his breath, who shall blame him? At least he wasted no time in useless lamentations, but reentered the building and placed himself in the hands of Tony, the bootblack.

As Tony pocketed the generous reward for his ministrations he showed a full set of strong, white teeth, and then said with a deprecating glance:

"Your bada luck, sir—my gooda luck—"

"H-m!" said Charles.

St. Just looked at his watch. The episode had delayed him ten minutes. He must hurry if he meant to catch Norton. But he made it.

"Hello!" said Norton, who was in the act of closing his desk as Charles entered. "Nearly missed me that time. Anything in particular? I've just about time to make my train."

"I guess you'll have to take the next one, Norton. I'm ready to talk business in connection with that Fifty Ninth Street plot."

"No need of missing a train on that account, old man," laughed Norton, slipping into his coat. "Nothing doing. You're just ten minutes too late."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Charles.

"Sold, old man—contracts signed and deposit in safe. I'll tell you about it if you'll walk with me—"

"So you see," said Norton, as they parted at the subway entrance, "if you had caught me a few minutes earlier I'd have closed with you for a hundred and fifty. Now I get ten thousand more, and

you get left. I call that a piece of luck, Charles!"

"H-m!" said Charles.

That evening Charles went to see his grandmother, of whom he was extremely fond. The St. Justs had taken refuge in America during the days of the Terror, and had remained here. The grandfather of Charles, when a young man, had visited France, on business and pleasure bent.

There it was his good fortune to meet his charming far-away kinswoman, Adelaide St. Just, and—still better fortune—to persuade her to return with him as his wife.

"My boy," said Mme. St. Just, with a vivacity that neither years nor American surroundings had been able to subdue, "it is a most strange and unheard-of thing that I have to tell. We are halted by a barricade, the street is torn up, impossible—there is nothing to do but to turn back and proceed by the dreadful avenue, surrounded by trucks and carts, and who can say what! Again we halt. It is the police—"

"Traffic rules, *madame*," said Charles.

"Yes, I know. He holds up his hand and blows his whistle. We halt. The others pass. He blows his whistle again; those others halt; we pass.

"But while we wait, the wind comes—you have seen it, that wind. Hats fly, dust, papers, everything, high in the air, everywhere!"

"Yes," said Charles, laughing. "I have seen it and felt it, *madame*, and it is most unpleasant."

"But wait, but wait, my boy. The wind goes. We are already in motion, when I look down, and what do I find?"

She paused dramatically.

"There, lying quietly on my lap, what do I find, I ask you?"

"Some one's new Easter hat, perhaps," ventured the smiling Charles.

"A hat! But no, I should have felt it descend, stupid. Lying there so quietly, I find—this. Look at it. Examine it well, I beg of you." And into his hand she thrust a small card.

"You see—you see!" she exclaimed.

"I see a small, white card—an Easter-card, or, more likely, a dinner-card, I should say, with flowers upon it, and exceedingly well done they are, too."

"But the flowers, stupid, the flowers, what are they, those flowers?"

"Why, daisies. Small daisies."

"Daisies!" exclaimed *madame* with withering scorn. "They are marguerites; such as I gathered as a child. Marguerites, such as grow not outside of France, and more, of a kind that grew in but one place in the whole of France. I know them well."

"That is, indeed, a curious coincidence; but are you quite sure, *madame?*"

"Sure? I know! But look. Examine. Do you see nothing among the stems in the corner there?"

"Upon my word, *madame*, it looks like a monogram. What sharp eyes you have! Yes, I make it out now. It is 'J. A.,' and there seems to be a middle letter of some sort."

"J. A., and a middle letter of some sort! Oh, stupid, stupid! Look below! Look below!"

The smiling face of her grandson grew serious as he obeyed her.

"I see it," he said, looking up.

"And what do you see, then?"

"A lily," he answered.

"Yes?"

"The Lily of St. Just."

"And the letters, now. What are they, then?"

"A. St. J.," he replied, wondering.

"Yes, my boy, Adelaide St. Just."

"But, *madame!* How? Why? Surely you—"

"I, at my age, paint dinner-cards! Assuredly not!

"No, no, my Charles," she continued. "Chance, luck, brought that card to me. To me, the one person in all the world, perhaps, who could understand its message.

"And what is it, this chance, this luck, but the hand of *Le Bon Dieu* working in ways we do not understand? But the message of the card I do understand.

"It says to me more plainly than words: 'Here in this great city is one of thy name and race. She has need of thee!'"

"She?" questioned Charles. "But, *madame*, how can you tell?"

"How? It is the touch of a young hand,

a girl's hand. I can tell, and she is in trouble. I feel it. You, my son, must find her."

"But *madame*—"

"But, but —" the old lady interrupted with sparkling eyes. "A girl —a St. Just, in trouble, and you say 'but'! Find her and bring her to me!" she commanded.

Charles bowed. "All that a man can do I will, but you have set me no easy task, *madame!*"

Charles St. Just, like most lawyers, was not without experience in the conduct of such a search. He was by no means convinced that his grandmother's reading of the card was the correct one.

Nevertheless, he left no means of solving the mystery untried, but the weeks grew into months without the discovery of a single clue.

It still rained heavily when St. Just entered the vestibule of the great department-store. He was not fond of department-stores, and but for the rain would have gone farther afield to make his purchases. As he hurried toward the inner doors, half-furled umbrella in hand, he noticed a slender, thickly veiled girl who was apparently examining the contents of her pocketbook.

A stout woman, buried to the eyes in bundles, knocked against the girl, knocking the pocketbook from her hands. Straight toward Charles it flew.

St. Just had not been called the best college infielder of his day for nothing. Hampered though he was by the umbrella, he caught the pocketbook and, with a smile, held it out to the girl.

"I think it is all there," said he, "but you had better make sure."

"No, no," said the girl, clutching the rather shabby purse tightly. "It was quite empty. My—my money was all in another pocket."

"Humph," said the stout lady, whose temper was ruffled, "I guess—" But, catching St. Just's eye, she merely concluded her sentence with a sniff and plunged onward.

"I thank you, sir," said the girl. "You are very quick and kind."

There was something in the voice with its charming little foreign accent that made Charles loath to go. But he knew his New York, and, raising his hat, passed on. Yet, even after he was safely back in his bachelor quarters, he found himself repeating: "I thank you, sir. You are very quick and kind," and wondering what sort of a face the thick veil had concealed.

"Quick and kind," murmured St. Just, shaking out the folds of his wet umbrella, and from somewhere in its folds a yellow card fluttered to the floor. It was a pawn-ticket.

Some one by the name of "Smith" had pledged a ring for twenty-five dollars, and the date showed that the time for redemption would expire on the morrow.

"Now, where the deuce did you come from?" said Charles.

It had not been raining when he left the store, he had not opened his umbrella. By Jove, the ticket must have fallen into it when he caught that pocketbook on the fly! What chance had he of finding the owner in a single day!

"Mr. Isaacs," said St. Just, "here is my card; five minutes at the telephone will convince you that I am of good standing in this community."

"Listen," said Isaacs. "We have rules in this business. "But" —reading St. Just's card again—"I will tell you this. The young woman what left that ring calls herself May Smith, but it's dollars to doughnuts her name ain't Smith

"She gave an address, but that ain't nothing. There ain't nothing crooked; she's all right, you understand, but that's the way they do.

"And, listen; don't you worry about the ticket. She ain't never taken anything out, and she never will."

In the end Charles paid the interest, instructing Isaacs to hold the renewal ticket till he could find the owner

"I hadn't ought to," said the smiling Isaacs, "but want to take a look at it?"

"Yes," said St. Just. "That might help me"

At the first glimpse of the ring the blood rang in his ears.

"It can't be, it can't be!" he whispered, but it was—for deep graven in the massive gold were the motto and emblem of his own race

"Say, boss, how much is in it for me if I tell you where to find her?"

St. Just came wide awake with a start. Isaacs's clerk had followed him to the street.

"Five dollars," was the quick reply.

"Make it a ten-spot," said the fellow. "She don't go out till afternoon. You can see her in five minutes. How about it?"

"All right," Charles said, "if you can make good."

"Come in!"

So sure was he of the voice that Charles silently passed over the money to his guide, and pointed to the stairs.

"Oh, all right!" whispered the clerk with a grin.

The moment that Charles entered the room he knew that the search was ended. At sight of the pale girl standing by the window all doubt vanished. One of his most valued possessions was a miniature of Mme. St. Just, painted shortly before her marriage.

This slender girl, in spite of pallor and other pitiful evidences of distress, might well have sat for that portrait.

"Mlle. St. Just, I represent Mme Charles St. Just, of this city, who believes you to be of her family," he began.

"Mme. St. Just!" exclaimed the girl, leaning heavily against the window-sill. "But you -you are he who—"

"Never mind that now," Charles interrupted gently. "We shall get on better and faster, I am sure, if you will let me begin at the beginning." And forthwith he plunged into a narrative of the family history.

"There were three brothers—Charles, Henri, and Victor—in the troublesome days of the Revolution. Charles came to America, Henri took hiding in France, but Victor was supposed to have disappeared, leaving no trace—"

"No," said the girl; "he escaped to Canada, but only to be killed a few years later during an Indian raid. He left a young son—my own grandfather. I remember him well."

"Ah," said Charles, "but you returned to France—"

"With my father, yes, when I was quite small. Things went not well with us in the last years. At his death, three years ago, I came to this country as a governess with an American family.

"But"—she shrugged her shoulders—"for two years I have made my living by painting—and it pays not well."

"It was through your painting that we traced you."

He told the strange story of the dinner-card, at length, but he made no mention of the pawn-ticket and the ring. That information he would have reserved for some other time.

"Now," said Charles, "we know who we are—*madame* and you and I—and surely from this day forth we three, the last of our race, shall stand together and uphold each other in all things to the best possible advantage.

"I go to telephone the good news, and you, my cousin, be prepared for the coming of a very gentle and loving but imperious dragon who will carry you off to her lair. Resistance will be useless."

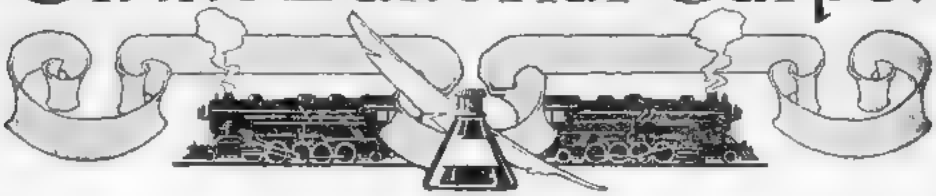
Six months later Charles St. Just closed a long letter to his friend Perkins in these words

"You understand now, Perk, why I have recanted and began my letter: 'Here's to Luck.' On the day you started on the road that led to fame and fortune, the offended goddess took me in hand.

"First she deluged me with city mud; next she robbed me of a fat commission; then she sent me on a wearisome and apparently hopeless search. But, womanlike, she changed her mind and smiled upon me, and with a wave or two of her wand led me straight and swift to my goal.

"From start to finish neither merit nor demerit of mine has counted. To-morrow is our wedding-day—Adelaide's and mine—and it is 'Luck,' nothing else in the round world, that I must thank for it. So, again I say, with all my heart—'Here's to Luck!'"

On the Editorial Carpet



THERE is nothing that fires the imagination as strongly as hidden treasure, and the great majority of people, you among them, holding possession of the secret of a hoard of buried gold, and given the opportunity to search for it, would fare forth gladly and joyously in quest of it. That is what *Richard Colebrooke*, a young New Yorker, does in a swinging, modern romance that begins in this magazine next week.

A LEGACY OF ADVENTURE.

BY GEORGE C. SHEDD.

Author of "Without Beat of Drum," "Ships Triumphant," etc.

A swashbuckling ancestor of *Colebrooke* leaves him the key to the location of the buried doubloons and other coins of ancient mintage—a key in the form of a quaintly written old script that is redolent with the romance of bygone days. With *Charlie Stone*, a friend, *Colebrooke* goes over the seas to Veragua, in South America, and, in the face of innumerable obstacles, proceeds to the task of seizing his rightful heritage. In this stirring novel—so realistic does it become at times—you will seemingly stand at the very side of *Colebrooke* in the mysterious "House of Dripping Blood" and witness with abhorrence the sinister events that transpire within its shadowy walls.

And then again, you will wander through the moonlit streets of Veragua and see *Stone*, with a new light in his eyes, walking with a girl of infinite beauty and charm—a girl whom you and *Colebrooke* know only as "The Senorita of the Roses," until—

You finish the concluding chapter of one of the finest and most thrillingly romantic tales that you have ever read.

IN addition to the first part of "A Legacy of Adventure" and instalments of two other exceptionally good serials, there will be a complete novelette in next week's issue. Charles Wesley Sanders is the author. To every reader of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE that means a good story. It's a railroad tale—at least, all the people concerned are railroaders or connected with the railroad—and "J. Lee, Boomer Extraordinary," is the title.

FRANK KAVANAUGH tells about the experiences of some rails in the big war. When they left their railroad jobs, they had no idea but that they would take up the big game when they returned. But will they? Other fields have opened to these men. Read "Will They Go Back to Railroading?"

WELL, this week's *Austin Irby* story leaves the boy wonder more or less up in the air, doesn't it? He has more adventures coming to him as an outcome of his wonderful safety device. Mr. MacMahon will tell you about them in next week's number. And it's mighty good stuff.

LIKE ghost stories? Like to have chills running up your spine and your hair standing on end? Then you'll like "The House of Many Shadows," by Harry C. Douglas.

MOST Western "hold-up" stories *end* with the hold-up. "Art—and the Goods," by Francis James, *starts* with a hold-up. Then things begin to happen It's as ingenious a plot as we've seen for many a day, and a story that will keep you guessing right up to the last line. Next week!

ALL telegraph men—and every one else who enjoys a good short story—will enjoy "The Law and the Spider," by W. T. Sebelle. It's intensely interesting.

OCTAVUS ROY COHEN is represented by a story of the mines of the South, "The Conquest of Cora." In it you will make the acquaintance of a woman of the sort that cause the downfall of kingdoms and of a big, strong man. We won't tell you what happens—that would spoil the story for you. But look for it next week

IN addition to all these good things, there will be an "Old-Times" article by "J E. M."; an article on the work of the railroad detective—we say an article, but it reads like fiction—by William Spencer; the By the Light of the Lantern department; railroad stories by J. W Earp and H. Keith Trask, and a railroad fable by George Gilbert.

A GREAT, big, vital, interesting magazine! There isn't a dull page in it; you'll enjoy reading it from start to finish, and then start in and read it all again.

SNATCHED FROM THE MAIL-CRANE.

EDWARD WENTWORTH BEATTY, the new, young president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in the current *Canadian Bookman*, makes a plea for the establishment of permanent libraries in every Canadian community. His life is a shining example of what "mixing" will do for a man. Had he confined his reading to the musty tomes that lined the shelves of his law office, he would not have been chosen to be head of the greatest transportation system in the world, and the rakish angle to which he tips his head-gear is the sign manual of a mixer among men

In disseminating library propaganda, President Beatty is following in the wake of his predecessor, Lord Shaughnessy, who is a great reader, and particularly fond and proud of Canadian literature Within the year, Lord Shaughnessy, with the help of booksellers and librarians, gathered together copies of such books as can be considered representative of what is creative and original in Canadian literature, and presented this nucleus of a library to the Canadian Club in New York. The books selected embrace works of fifty-five authors, and offer a good "intellectual mixture."

This is what Mr. Beatty has to say about the reading habit.

IN the days of Methuselah the chief end of man was to live a long life. To-day it is not the length, but the intensity of the life that counts, the wise man crowding all he can into every minute. There are different ways of increasing intensity of life—for instance, the way of the "mixer," who, from his social acquaintances, picks up information and experience, much of which may be of practical use to him, and all of which makes him a more interesting human being. His life becomes fuller through his conversation. The reader of good books might be called an "intellectual mixer," who converses through the printed page with minds often greater than his own. If he reads wisely, and assimilates what he reads, his intellectual life is so much more intense, and provided that he does not become merely bookish, so much a better citizen he becomes

The greatest mistake a business man can make is to confine his interest only to his office. He loses perspective, and thinks of the world as revolving round his business, although that in reality is but a speck in the universe Instead of being, as he fancies, "on the job," he lives in a mentally isolated village, off the track and out of touch with the intellectual traffic of the world, which uses the book as its chief means of communication

HERE is an interesting letter from a twelve-year-old future railroader, who shows great promise of becoming a worthy knight of the throttle. The model locomotive he mentions is very skilfully constructed of cardboard and artistically painted. It was complete, even to the hogger and the tallow-pot in the cab, and the old smoke rolling out of the funnel We have no

doubt that before many years pass, this young man will either be pulling a hitch or designing locomotives for somebody else to operate. Here is his letter:

I live in a small town of Valatie, New York; 1,410 people in the village. The Albany Southern Railroad runs through. The terminals are in Albany and in Hudson, a distance of 37.2 miles.

I go up to Nivervill, a distance of two miles, and all the steam-cars of the Boston and Albany Railroad. The Albany Southern Railroad is an electric line. The cars are like street-cars, and they have one freight engine, which runs two times a day—one from Albany to Hudson and one from Hudson to Albany. It is funny, in winter.

Well, my age is twelve years my next birthday, in November. My name is Wm. G. Dayton, and I have taken the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE for a year, and I am going to take it another year. I have saved all the books, and as I was looking over the file I saw the engine a man made in September, and I thought I would make one and send it to you. It took me from eight o'clock to a quarter to ten to make it. Under separate cover I am sending you the locomotive.

WM. G. DAYTON.

SIDNEY SPRINGS A NEW ONE.

F. H. SIDNEY, the versatile genius of Wakefield, Massachusetts, comes to bat with a brand-new theory to account for the painful ailment known as "writer's cramp." What F. H. says may not always be "so," strictly speaking, but he usually manages to make what he says interesting—even when it ain't so. Here is his latest:

Mr. Melvin W. Beardman, of Wakefield, Massachusetts, who is employed in a bank at Cambridge, has a gold pen that he has used in the bank for forty years. Mr. Beardman's predecessor in the bank used this same pen for five years, making in all forty-five years of continuous service for this pen. Both Mr. Beardman and his fellow clerks claim that the constant scratching of a steel pen on paper generates a current of electricity which induces a succession of slight shocks in the arm of the writer, causing writer's cramp and interfering with his efficiency.

This trouble, they say, is remedied by the use of a gold pen, which does not scratch, and therefore does not set up the electrical disturbance caused by the use of a steel pen. There! Now let us all go out and buy for ourselves expensive gold pens!

F. H. SIDNEY.

Wakefield, Massachusetts.

ANOTHER PUMPER HEARD FROM.

SOME time ago we printed in this department a very interesting letter from pumper C. E. Phelps, suggesting that the pumpers and their work was a phase of railroading that deserved more attention. No doubt many a lonesome pumper feels the same way about it. Probably few people, when riding smoothly and comfortably in chair-car or Pullman, ever think to give any credit to the pumpman; but he is certainly entitled to a good share of it, for without him the train could not be moved. Now comes another pumper, who seconds Mr. Phelps's motion that we print more pump stuff.

I was much interested in Mr. C. E. Phelps's letter, and would like to shake hands with him. It is the first time that I have seen the pumpers mentioned. Thanks to you and Mr. Phelps for it. I agree with him, and am very glad to be a small link in the great chain to help keep the iron wheels moving. I am a night pumper for the Pennsylvania Railroad, and a lonesome, tiresome job it is. But I have two good friends—my faithful dog, Rover, and the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. They keep me from getting lonesome. I am so glad that the magazine is coming every week. It is the best magazine I have ever read, and I have had a good many. I hope you can find space in it to give us pumpers a page, as Mr. Phelps suggests. I think it would be fine. If any brother would like to trade magazines with me, please write to me.

CHAS. AHRENS.

Macedonia, Ohio.

"A HUMDINGER OF A STORY."

WHEN you start to read a good story, and just when you are getting real interested, and the tale is getting real exciting as it works up to the grand climax, something slips and you miss a number of the magazine, and the news-dealer is all out, and you can't find a copy anywhere in town, and have to write to the publisher to send you one, so you won't miss the rest of that tantalizing tale—don't it make you mad? Well, then, you can understand just how William R. Stiles felt when he missed a number containing the most interesting part of "The Treasure of the Peak."

I am lacking one copy of the good old RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE, and how we missed it is more than I can tell. I began about the middle of October to look for it, and most every day my son would go and ask for it, and always the answer would be: "They haven't come yet." So when they did get here and I got mine, lo, and behold! I was one short, and it seems so queer how we missed it. It is the one before November 2—the one with the last chapters of "The Treasure of the Peak." That is a humdinger of a story, and I know the last chapters will be mighty interesting, so I hate to lose it. Also the opening chapters of "Harrigan!" So if you have one of those copies on hand, send it along without delay, and enclosed find ten cents for payment of same. I am going to sign for it by the year, then I will

know where I am at, all the time. I would rather go without my dinner than the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. It is the best magazine I ever read, and I have read it for the past seven years.

What has become of our old friends, *Honk* and *Horace?* Have they gone to the war, or what? If they have, I hope we will soon have peace so they will get back on the job.

WILLIAM R. STILES.

355 Keyes Avenue,
Watertown, New York.

IN PRAISE OF "J. E. M."

NEVER mind, "J. E. M.," if that naughty Mike Murphy did roast you that time. Just pin this medal on your wishbone, accept the vote of thanks, and cheer up:

In your department, "Snatched off the Mail-Crane," December's magazine, I notice an article by one Mike Murphy, Dallas, Texas, criticising the articles written for your magazine by "J. E. M." Personally, I find it hard to believe Mr. Murphy to be much of a "boomer" opr. Rather, he is the "silk-stocking dude" that he calls "J. E. M."

Now, I find these articles very, very interesting, and look forward for these narrations. They take me back to the days when I was only a poor tramp opr. My experiences were so closely related to his that they seem my own.

It is not the exact dates and names that have so much meaning to me, but his experiences; and I also want to state right here that I consider he has a wonderful memory as to dates, names, and places, as all have noticed in his previous articles.

Hoping the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE will publish more stories by "J. E. M." in the near future,

R. ANDERSON.

(Ex-opr., M. C. R. R.; N. Y. C.; C. B. and Q. (twice); D. and R. G.; Colo. Midland; S. P.; O. S. L.; C. M. and St. P. (three times); G. N.; Nor. Pac.; and Western Union and Postal).

Vermontville, Michigan.

FLASHES FROM OUR READERS.

I am so pleased that my favorite magazine is now a weekly. It assures me of something for Sunday reading that I thoroughly enjoy. Wishing you every success in the new venture, I am,

Yours respectfully,

MRS. H. J. JOHNSTON.

Tontogany, Ohio.

I was down to Memphis a few days since, and, of course, not having had my favorite magazine for some time, I beat it pronto for the nearest news-stand. Lo, and imagine my surprise and my happiness at finding the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE now a weekly!

Bless you, is my fervent prayer, gentlemen. Just keep the good improvements up.

Respectfully,

THOMAS WEBB.

Greenfield, Tennessee.

Permit me to say that when you made a weekly out of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE something real happened. I started to read the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE when I was learning to pound brass, about eight years ago, and have never missed a copy since. One of our switchmen and myself make a run for the news-stand every week to see which buys first. Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

C. O. DAVIS,
Chief Despatcher, M. B. S. Ry.

Muscatine, Iowa.

Will you allow a female reader to give an opinion on your magazine, or are we to keep away from men's magazines? Taking a chance on it, I must say that it is just dandy. I have been a reader for over two years, and every copy is better than the one before. That is saying something, but it is a fact.

The telegraph stories are especially interesting even to an "ivory pounder." Hoping I have not taken up too much of your time,

J. M. SPEARMAN.

Princess Theater,
Ottawa, Canada.

I have for the last two years bought your magazine at the news-stands each month, and think it is the finest literature on railroading which has ever been, or ever will be, published. I take special interest in the department entitled "By the Light of the Lantern." Many answers in this department, although I never asked any questions, answer questions which I thought of asking.

Although I am not yet working for the government's new protégé, next fall I am going to take a railroad and civil engineer's course at the University of Illinois, and after that get in with the followers of the "iron trail."

HORACE W. OLCOTT, JR.

41 Esplanade,
Mount Vernon, New York.

I am very glad indeed that you are making a weekly publication of the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. No one enjoys it more than I, although I am not a railroad man. There is not a dull page in the entire book, and I will be on the watch for it every week.

JOSEPH H. MANN.

Metropolis, Illinois.

Mother

I USED to be a little bit ashamed of the way I felt about Mother. I loved her, of course—loved her with all the love that could be crowded into a boy's heart—but I hated to show it. Only girls and babies, I thought, showed affection. It wasn't manly for a boy to be petted—especially if there was someone around to see.

I used to go to Mother when I had cut my finger or had some childish grief or woe and she would bind up my wound in my finger and my heart and drive away all the pain and sorrow in some strange, mysterious way that only mothers know about.

Then she'd put her arm around me and smooth my hair—but I'd pull away and swagger out, whistling loudly, and play with my dog.

But at nights when I'd gone tired to bed I'd think about Mother.

And always she appeared in a sort of soft light with a smile of understanding. To myself, I called her "The Greatest Mother in the World."

* * * *

The other day I saw a Red Cross Poster—a white clad nurse with a wounded soldier in her arms; they called it "The Greatest Mother in the World."

It brought a jealous little tug to my heart when I saw it. I resented the use of that title for a Red Cross Poster. It was my name for Mother.

I closed my eyes for a moment and a vision of Mother came to me. The same soft light and tender smile. And when I looked up at the poster again I understood.

I felt that the Red Cross had the right to use that title, "The Greatest Mother in the World."

For I realized that the spirit of my Mother—and yours—was behind that big organization—binding up cut fingers for little boys who have grown up and aren't really little boys any longer.

And that's the reason I'm going to answer "Present!" at the

RED CROSS CHRISTMAS ROLL CALL

DECEMBER 16-23

"Join the Red Cross — all you need is a heart and a dollar"

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COLGATE'S

Thrift Gifts

THIS Christmas must be a thrift-Christmas for many and good reasons. ¶ A small expenditure alone, however, does not mean thrift. ¶ A gift costing but a few pennies is extravagant if it is not useful; and one at any price is wasteful if it does not give full value. ¶ To make this a thrift-Christmas give useful gifts, not "gim-cracks"—and select those of standard value.

COLGATE & CO. *Established 1806* New York

The oldest firm of its kind in America and the largest in the world

For Him

A Handy Grip Shaving Stick that allows *all* the soap to be used—no waste Ribbon Dental Cream, safe, thorough and delicious.

For Her

A box or two of Talc, scented with her favorite perfume; half-dozen tubes of Mirage Cream—"Greaseless and vanishing."

For Baby

Coleo Soap, made entirely of vegetable oils—ideal for Baby's bath. A box of Baby Talc to make him comfortable and happy.

For Mother

A box of fine toilet soap for her own use, Coleo or Cashmere Bouquet. Charmis Cold Cream to protect her skin against winter weather.

For Father

Shaving Soap—Stick, Powder or Cream as he prefers — with Talc or Cold Cream to use after he has shaved. He will like Colgate's.

For Anybody

Ribbon Dental Cream, the safe, delicious dentifrice that is endorsed by more dentists than any other. Good Teeth—Good Health is a splendid Christmas Gift.

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